

2004

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**AN ANNOTATED TRANSLATION OF
“ACCOUNTS OF SUPERNATURAL RETRIBUTION”**

A Thesis Presented

by

ELLIOT MEIER BILLINGS

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

February 2004

Department of Asian Languages and Literatures

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“ACCOUNTS OF SUPERNATURAL RETRIBUTION”

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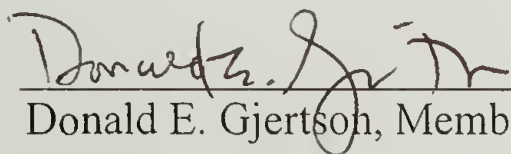
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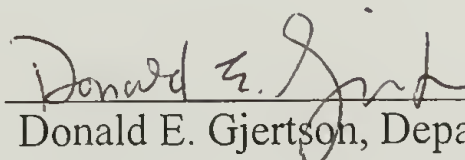
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In gratitude to my mother

Carol Wasserman

In grateful respect for my teachers

Alvin P. Cohen

Donald E. Gjertson

Shaodan Luo

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INTRODUCTION

Ming Bao Lu 冥報錄, or “Accounts of Supernatural Retribution”, is a collection of 28 “tales of the anomalous” compiled in the early Qing dynasty (about 1650-1660) by Lu Qi 陸圻, a minor literary figure from Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang Province in southeast China.

The tales, which treat of karmic retribution and the workings of the Chinese netherworld with an overtly didactic intent, are the product of an era which saw a resurgence of interest in *zhiguai*, a type of narrative literature traditionally held in disesteem--in public at least--by the Confucian elite, and whose popularity had been in decline for the preceding several centuries. Problematic for the study of Lu Qi is that the tales also belong to a period of “anomalous tale” production which would eventually be overshadowed by more ambitious works by renowned authors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and consequently Lu Qi’s work has been almost completely ignored.¹ It is only recently that there has come to be any scholarly interest in the West in the late period of anomalous tales; there has, however, not been any attempt made, to my knowledge, to fit the tales from this period into a systematic study of genre and typology.

What I have attempted to do, in the absence of critical scholarship on *Ming Bao Lu*, is to shed light on three main aspects of Lu Qi’s collection: 1) the conception of the netherworld as seen in *Ming Bao Lu*; 2) the themes of retribution; and 3) questions of authorship and intended audience. Following this is a complete annotated translation of the text, where I have provided explication of terms and concepts with which the Western

¹ Most critical scholarship of the “late *zhiguai*” period deals with Yuan Mei’s *Zi Bu Yu*, Pu Songling’s *Liaozhai Zhiyi*, and Ji Yun’s *Yuewei Caotang Biji*. The only mention I can find of Lu Qi’s work is in Leo Tak-hung Chan’s *Discourses on Foxes and Ghosts*, where the author devotes a few cursory lines to *Ming Bao Lu* and notes that such works are now “virtually unread”.

reader is not expected to be familiar. In my translation I have paid special attention to readability, and it is my hope that these tales may be enjoyed as a window into the conception of the supernatural and religious beliefs of some Chinese of the mid-seventeenth century.

CHAPTER 1

LU QI AND “ZHIGUAI”

1.1 Biographical Introduction to Lu Qi²

Lu Qi,³ also known by the cognomens⁴ Lijing 麗京 and Jingxuan 景宣, and the *nom de plume* Jiangshan 講山, was born in 1614 into an upper-class family of Qiantang County,⁵ Zhejiang Province. His father, Lu Yunchang 陸運昌 (dates unknown) held the office of Magistrate 知縣⁶ of Jishui 吉水 District, Jiangxi Province. The eldest of five children, Lu Qi and his brothers Lu Pei 陸培 (1617-1645), who passed the highest imperial examinations in 1640 and held the office of Senior Messenger 大行人, and Lu Jie 陸堦(dates?), enjoyed an illustrious reputation in the Hangzhou area for their literary talents, and were known as the “Three Lus”.

Lu Qi’s greatest renown seems to have come from his membership in the Denglou Society 登樓社, a local poetry society founded by Chen Zilong 陳子龍 (1608-1647), and whose ten members, among whom Lu Qi was considered to be the most talented, came to be known as the “Ten Masters of Xiling” (*Xiling shizi* 西泠十子), so named for the

² There is relatively little biographical data available on Lu Qi; even the biographical entries in the Qing era local gazettes of Hangzhou and the surrounding counties, the places where he enjoyed the most renown, offer little more than terse paragraphs of the main details of his life. The biographical information for this sketch, unless otherwise noted, is a composite of that found in the following historical sources: Wu Shan-jia’s *Fushe xingshi zhuanlüe*, j.5, pp. 2b-3a; Quan Zu-wang’s *Jie qi ting ji*, j.26, pp. 13-14., and Li Yuandu’s *Guochao xianzheng shilüe*, j. 37, pp. 11b-12a.

³ Although most modern biographical reference books list his year of birth as 1614, I have been unable to ascertain which primary source contains this date.

⁴ The cognomen, or “style” (*zi* 字) was an alternate name used to address an individual politely. This name, of which it was possible to have more than one, could be adopted and discarded at will, and was taken by males at the time of coming into adulthood (Cohen 2000, p.469).

⁵ Some biographical sources list his ancestral home as Renhe 仁和 County.

⁶ For translations of official names, I have followed Hucker’s *Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*.

Xiling bridge on the West Lake in Hangzhou.⁷ He was also a close friend of noted dramatist and essayist Li Yü (1611-1680), putative author of the famous work of erotic literature *The Carnal Prayer Mat* 肉鋪團.⁸

Lu Qi was also known throughout the Zhejiang and Fujian areas for medical skills he had acquired through treating his mother, for whom he was reputed to have cut off a piece of his thigh for medicine. One apocryphal anecdote relates how one patient was visited in a dream by a spirit who said to him, “Your illness is in your intestines and stomach. Go and get 96 ounces of mud and you shall live.” When the sick man related this episode to a friend, the latter was silent for a long time, and then suddenly exclaimed, “That means Master Lu Qi! His given name is composed of *tu* 土 (earth) and *jin* 斤 (one pound) (*tu* 土 + *jin* 斤 = Qi 圻), and his surname, Lu, sounds like ‘Liu’ (six). Put them together and you have 96 ounces (six *jin*) of earth.”⁹

In March 1645 Manchu troops crossed the Yangtze river and launched a brutal conquest of the Jiangnan region, massacring the inhabitants of Yangzhou and devastating the northern Zhejiang area. Lu Pei, a Ming loyalist, hung himself, and Lu Qi fled and went into hiding, first on the Fujian coast, and then in Fuzhou, where he shaved his head and became a monk. For a time Lu Qi lived a precarious existence amidst the chaos of war, but when his mother wrote to him urging him to return, he finally made his way back to Hangzhou.

In 1662, Lu Qi was implicated in the case of Zhuang Tinglong 莊廷鑑 (d. ca. 1660), also known as the Ming History case 明史案, because he was listed, apparently

⁷ *Zhongguo Gudai Wenxue Cidian*, p. 358.

⁸ Chang and Chang 1992, p. 64.

⁹ Quan Zuwang, j. 26, p. 13b.

without his knowledge, as an assistant compiler of the latter's heterodox volume of Ming history entitled the *Mingshi Jilue* 明史紀略.¹⁰ He and all of his family were imprisoned in late 1662, almost executed, but finally exonerated and released in 1663. He is reported to have said at that time, "Death had been determined as my lot, but luckily I was able to keep my head and maintain my clan intact. I might as well spend the rest of my life studying the Dao."¹¹

Shortly after his release he converted to Buddhism and abruptly left Hangzhou. Some time later Lu Qi's son Lu Yin heard that his father had gone to Mt. Huang,¹² and set off on foot to find him. After finally locating his father at Mt. Huang, he is reported to have knelt and wept and implored his father to return, to which Lu Qi replied, "In former days, when your mother was alive, I had somewhere to return. Now that she has passed, what have I to return to?" Lu Yin asked his father to hold a memorial ceremony at his mother's grave, and was thus able to convince his father to return.¹³

Some time later, Lu Qi once again left Hangzhou unannounced, this time stopping briefly at Danxia Mountain.¹⁴ Soon after, however, he again left under mysterious circumstances, and from this time on no one was again able to ascertain his whereabouts. Some said that he had either gone to Mount Wudang¹⁵ and become a Daoist, or gone

¹⁰ Chang and Chang 1992, p.64.

¹¹ Quan Zuwang, j. 26, p. 14b.

¹² Mt. Huang (*Huangshan* 黃山), a mountain in southern Anhui Province approximately 200 km west of Hangzhou, has been acclaimed in Chinese poetry and prose for the natural beauty of its scenery.

¹³ Quan Zuwang, j. 26, pp. 13b-14a.

¹⁴ Danxia Mountain (*Danxia* 丹霞), noted for its steep stone walls and pillars and the red sandstone which makes up the majority of the mountain, is located in modern Guangdong Province, approximately 800 km southwest of Hangzhou.

¹⁵ During the imperial period, Mount Wudang (*Wudangshan* 武當山) was a major center of Daoist activity. It is located in what is now Hubei Province, approximately 600 km from Hangzhou.

south of the Five Ridges¹⁶ and become a monk, and taken the Buddhist name Jinlong 金龍. Lu Yin, who had since passed the highest imperial examinations, resigned his official salary and set off to look for him, and it is said that he traveled many thousands of *li* over the course of several years, but ultimately died of grief without finding him.

Lu Qi is listed as having several works to his credit, among which are a collection of prose entitled *Delicate Words* (*Xian yan* 纖言), and *A Guidebook for the New Wife* (*Xinfu pu* 新婦譜), which he wrote in 1656 for his daughter who was to be wed.¹⁷

Curiously, there is no mention of *Ming Bao Lu* in primary sources I have consulted, possibly for reasons I will deal with in chapter 3.

1.2 The Early “Zhiguai”

Lu Qi’s collection belongs to a long-standing tradition of Chinese literary-language narrative which became known as “recording the anomalous”, or *zhiguai* 志怪. *Zhiguai* itself is a loosely defined term which did not come into its own as a bibliographic classification until relatively late,¹⁸ but has since been used as an appellation for the various types of accounts of supernatural activity found in Chinese literature as early as the Warring States period (475-221 BCE) and continuing through the late imperial period.

Some of the earliest extant examples of anomalous accounts from the Warring States and Han (206 B.C.- 220 A.D) periods show an affinity with traditional historical writing, and take many of their formal features and writing conventions from the classical

¹⁶ South of the Five Ridges (*Lingnan* 嶺南) is a general designation for the area of Guangdong and Guangxi Provinces, approximately 1500 km southwest of Hangzhou.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 69.

¹⁸ Ming Dynasty literary critic Hu Yinglin (1551-1602) was the first to use this term as a generic label in his classification of fictional and miscellaneous writings in the classical language (Kao, p.4).

historical works that constituted the only known historical narratives circulating at the time of their production.¹⁹ These early writings typically took two forms (1) descriptions of the anomalous deities, fauna and flora associated with specific localities, sometimes including narratives of mythical events associated with these localities (or associated with divine or human figures associated with the locality); (2) narratives of the exploits of mythical figures, sages, rulers, shamans, and specialists in esoteric arts, subdivided into two historiographically based forms: (a) the “annals” form, chronologically listing brief anecdotes of events associated with a single figure, and (b) the “arrayed biographies” form, listing successive entries for multiple persons or figures of a similar type, each entry narrating a string of interconnected events.²⁰

Some scholars see in these writings the origins of what would later develop into Chinese fiction. Campany, however, argues that the early recorders of anomalous accounts considered their work as a branch of history which would preserve fragments of historical accounts and serve as a repository of popular customs.²¹ Noble though their intentions may have been, however, materials dealing with the anomalous were held--publicly at least--in such low esteem by Confucian guardians of the imperial archives that the majority of the earliest *zhiguai* writings survived only in fragments copied into *leishu* “encyclopedias” and textual commentaries.²²

The collapse of the Han Dynasty in 220, and the ensuing chaos as short-lived local regimes fought for power until China’s unification under the Sui in 589, caused a gradual weakening of the state-supported Confucian constraints on ideology and made

¹⁹ Dewoskin 1977, p. 22

²⁰ Campany 1996, 99.

²¹ Ibid, p.157.

²² Dewoskin 1986, p. 280

possible the expansion of new fields of learning and material for literary composition. It is during this period that we see a gradual development from the early types of anomalous accounts to collections of *zhiguai* writings as a full-fledged genre.

Thematically speaking, Six Dynasties *zhiguai* evidence an overwhelming preoccupation with the supernatural, which, if not entirely without precedent in Han and pre-Han literature, took place now on a heretofore-unseen scale. Two of the seminal *zhiguai* works of this period, *Records of an Inquest into the Spirit-Realm* (*Soushenji* 搜神記) by Gan Bao 干寶 (c.340), and *Arrayed Marvels* (*Lieyizhuan* 列異傳) by Cao Pi 曹丕 (187-226), deal with such matters as encounters with ghosts, interactions with deities and visits to the netherworld, resuscitation after death, and prophetic dreams.

Campany sees such supernatural accounts as a means by which the authors could treat subject matter which was scantily treated elsewhere due to Confucian prohibition or considerations of prestige. It offered a permissible forum for depictions of the day-to-day workings of the extraordinary world: how the dead behaved and what they were interested in, what the topography and society of the realm of the dead were like, and the full range of possible relationships and interactions between the living and the dead. In the process, the other world came to take on a recognizably human aspect and be rendered familiar.²³

Another aspect of the intellectual climate of this time is the growing influence of Buddhism and the emergence of the genre of Buddhist miracle tales. This tradition was influenced not only by the proto-*zhiguai* writings of the Han and pre-Han periods but also by the Sanskrit *avadana* tales that started to be translated into Chinese in the early third

²³ Campany 1996, p. 201.

century concurrently with the appearance of some of the first Chinese collections of supernatural tales. One of the distinguishing features of the *avadana* tales was that they presented anomalous incidents as the result of heroic acts performed in the previous lives of Buddhas. The *avadana* tales not only supplied occasional plots or motifs for Chinese Buddhist writers of strange tales, but also provided a large corpus of tales with a didactic message that likely played a role in the incorporation of didactic thematic material in their own collections.²⁴

Equally important for the development of the Buddhist miracle tale was the increasing acceptance in China of Mahayana Buddhist Pure Land doctrine, which held that salvation could be obtained through worship or the invocation of the names of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas rather than solely through intellectual or spiritual attainments.²⁵ The translation of the Mahayana scripture *Lotus Sutra* in 286 A.D., in particular, brought into China the concept of the savior Avalokitesvara (Chinese Guanyin 觀音), a Bodhisattva who, when his name is invoked, comes to the aid of true believers. Many of the Buddhist miracle tale collections contain stories depicting Avalokitesvara's divine intervention and protagonists' salvation through the recitation of the sutras.

Another important facet of the supernatural which developed in Buddhist miracle tales is the concept of karmic retribution and the supernatural as an agent thereof. In the *Records of Manifest Miracles* (*Xuanyan Ji* 宣驗記) of Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403-444) we see, in addition to the previously mentioned tales of Avalokitesvara's miraculous intervention, tales describing karmic retribution for good or evil actions, and dreams in which deceased victims of evil acts by the protagonist appear in the protagonist's dreams

²⁴ Gjertson 1989, p. 13.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 14.

and seek redress, a motif which would reoccur in later tales, indicating that dreams were seen as legitimate means of communication between the worlds of the dead and the living.²⁶

Another important and influential work, which represents perhaps the high point of miracle tale composition, is the *Records of Miraculous Retribution* (*Mingbao ji* 冥報記) of Tang Lin 唐臨 (b.600). This collection is especially relevant to the present study for two main reasons.

First, *Mingbao ji* is an early example of didacticism in the *zhiguai* genre. Tang Lin makes quite clear in his preface that his purpose for writing the collection was to “exhort” those who did not accept the doctrine of karmic retribution, in the hope that such a collection of thusly themed tales would help to convince nonbelievers of its truth.

Second, the descriptions of the workings of karmic retribution in *Mingbao ji* contain a fairly systematic description of a netherworld constructed similarly to the world of the living both in physical and bureaucratic structure:

In a typical tale, after the protagonist dies he is escorted into an official compound (*kuan-fu* 官府), which is entered through a large gate (*ta-men* 大門) that opens onto a thoroughfare lined on both sides by government offices (*kuan-tsao* 官曹). This official’s compound in the netherworld is indistinguishable in appearance from the one in the world of the living: one protagonist who had been summoned by the nether world officials, for example, did not even realize that he had died until after he had entered the compound and met an acquaintance whom he knew to be dead.²⁷

Furthermore, death is portrayed as the netherworldly analogue to arrest or official summons on earth, where the protagonist is met at the point of death by underworld emissaries or the ghosts of those whom he has wronged and is taken into custody or led

²⁶ Ibid, p. 22.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 135.

away. As we will see in the next chapter, such themes were to play a large part in *Ming Bao Lu*.

CHAPTER 2

THE NETHERWORLD AND RETRIBUTION IN “MING BAO LU”

It is perhaps a testament to the obscurity of *Ming Bao Lu* that the only Western scholar to have mentioned the text in his work mischaracterized it as a collection which “expressly documents the operations of the retributive order in a specific location--hell.”²⁸ In fact, the main preoccupation of the collection is the recording of anomalous events which serve to illustrate the doctrine of karmic retribution, or as Lu Qi states in his preface “doing good works causing fortune to descend, and doing evil causing misfortune to descend”; the netherworld is explicitly alluded to in only 8 of the 28 tales. Moreover, not every tale deals with retribution per se; in five of the tales there is no mention made, either implicitly or explicitly, that the incident recorded is connected in any way with retribution. Some of the tales in which the netherworld does play an important role in the plot concern themselves only with description of its bureaucratic workings (both the regular and the anomalous as we will see), and not at all with its function as a mechanism of retributive justice. And lastly, tales in which karmic retribution is implicitly or explicitly noted as explanation for the protagonist’s good or bad fortune do not necessarily connect such an end with the workings of the netherworld.

However, although the netherworld itself figures explicitly in a minority of the tales, it is the only one of the various agents of recompense in the collection that is systematically conceived, and a brief comparison of its organizational procedure and makeup with that found in another contemporary work, the *Precious Records* (*Yuli*

²⁸ Chan 1998, p. 184.

Baochao 玉曆寶鈔), will illustrate how the conception of the netherworld in *Ming Bao Lu* might have been formed. Before I proceed to a brief outline of the netherworld as conceived in *Ming Bao Lu* and its operation as a mechanism of retributive justice, it may be useful to first introduce several key Chinese folk religious concepts regarding the supernatural bureaucracy which presides over life and death.

First is the cult of the Deity of the Eastern Peak (*Dongyue* 東嶽). The peak to which the deity's name refers is the eastern peak of Mount Tai (*Taishan* 泰山) in Shandong province. This peak became connected with the concepts of death and punishment early in Chinese history, and the deity associated with it came to be conceived of as a judge of the dead. Over time, this concept spread throughout China, and temples to the Deity of the Eastern Peak came to be built in almost all major population centers. Eberhard has noted that there were already five such temples in Hangzhou by the Song dynasty (960-1279).²⁹ The main role of this deity, who operates under the direct authority of the Jade Emperor, the supreme deity of the universe, is to preside over human life, determining times of birth and death and maintaining a bureaucracy which keeps the registers for everyone on earth. He was at one time also regarded by some as one of the Princes of the Netherworld. There is some controversy over whether both conceptions refer to the same deity; in *Ming Bao Lu* at least, there appears to be a fusion of the two roles in the portrayal of the Deity of the Eastern Peak.

Subordinate to the Deity of the Eastern Peak is the Deity of Walls and Moats (*Chenghuang* 城隍). This deity is the protector of the district where his temple is located, and serves as the link between the worlds of the living and the dead. Typically the office

²⁹ Eberhard 1967, p. 56.

is held by a man who is appointed to the position after his death on the basis of his karmic merit, and besides his other functions as grantor of peace, happiness, good harvests and the like, he also appears to serve as judge for those who wish to appeal the terms of their death or defend themselves against already deceased accusers.

Last is the Locality Deity (*Tudi* 土地), whose main role is to maintain registers of all of the births and deaths in the district where his temple is located, and to check them against the records of the scheduled births and deaths of all living beings in his jurisdiction sent down by the Deity of the Eastern Peak. When a person's predetermined lifespan is up, it is the Locality Deity's task to arrange for his arrest and conveyance to the netherworld.

Also important is the Chinese conception of the soul. The soul was seen by some Chinese as consisting of two parts, the ethereal soul, or *hun* 魂, and the corporeal soul, *po* 魄. Traditionally the ethereal soul, or the living soul, was that which rose from the body upon death, and could be taken into custody by underworld emissaries for judgment when its owner's allotted span in the world of the living had come to its end. The corporeal soul was that part which normally stayed with the body and decayed along with the corpse, although we will see in *Ming Bao Lu* that this was not always the case. In the interest of simplicity and for stylistic reasons I have retained the terms "ethereal soul" and "corporeal soul" in my translation only in cases where both *hun* and *po* souls appear in the same tale. In all other cases I have translated *hun* as simply "soul".

2.1 Bureaucratic Procedure of the Netherworld in “Ming Bao Lu”

As decreed by the Jade Emperor, the records of all living humans are subject to biannual review in the netherworld by the relevant netherworld authorities. During these reviews, the various Netherworld Princes assemble and court officials read out comprehensive lists of the acts, both virtuous and evil, committed by each person in the world of the living since birth, and when there are discrepancies between the Princes' and court officials' records, they are rectified immediately. At all other times throughout the year, the records of each living person's crimes are continuously updated, so that if a living person is found to have committed a crime, his name will appear within the records in a hell of appropriate severity, which he will then enter upon death. If he continues to commit crimes, then his name will be moved to a prison of even greater severity. If he does enough good works to compensate for the bad, then his name will be removed altogether.

The ghosts of those who have been wronged by such crimes in a previous life may file a complaint in the netherworld court and seek redress. If the complaint is found to have merit, it is accepted and a warrant is issued to the plaintiffs for the soul of the accused. The plaintiffs may then travel to the world of the living, arrest the soul, and escort it back to the netherworld to be interrogated by the appropriate netherworld judge.

When a summons or an arrest warrant is issued, it must first be presented to, and presumably approved by, the Locality Deity with jurisdiction over the place of birth of the person listed on the document. From there the document is passed on through Pingguan 平関,³⁰ and ultimately to the Locality Deity within whose jurisdiction the

³⁰ This is presumably a pass on the death route, however I have been unable to find any reference to this term in any of the works I have consulted.

person in question first fell ill. Only after this procedure is complete may the soul be arrested. Once in custody, the soul also follows a similar procedure, first traveling to the place where its owner first fell ill, and subsequently to its owner's birthplace, and only then on to the netherworld.³¹

In cases where the family of a person whose soul has been arrested by its accusers in accordance with normal procedure feels that they have been wronged, they may file an appeal with the prefectural Deity of Walls and Moats and request arbitration. The Deity of Walls and Moats will then issue a summons to the plaintiffs and the soul for a hearing. Both sides will then present their respective cases and the underlings of the Deity of Walls and Moats will examine the pertinent records and make recommendations. The Deity of Walls and Moats will then make a preliminary judgment on the merits of the case. If the case is then found to be without merit, the plaintiffs may be punished by beatings or whipping.

As the bureau of the Deity of Walls and Moats is not empowered to hand down sentences, the case will then be referred to a higher court.

2.2 Structure of the Netherworld

Although there is a significant amount of information to be gleaned from *Ming Bao Lu* regarding the bureaucratic procedures of the netherworld, there is precious little of a concrete nature that we can learn about its structure.

We learn, primarily from the testimony of the tales' protagonists who have made the journey there, that the section of the underworld dealing with administrative matters has a similar structure to the government bureaus of the world of the living, consisting

³¹ There are, however, discrepancies within the text regarding this formality. See story #15.

typically of complexes of palaces, great halls, and offices divided into local bureaus and further subdivided according to province, prefecture, counties, etc, where records pertaining to each resident are maintained.

Protagonists in the tales also testify to the existence of some of the subhells to be found there, whose tortures included: boiling in oil, pillars of fire, a forest of swords, and a mountain of knives, however no further information is provided.

2.3 Instances of Bureaucratic Mishaps

As in the world of the living, the netherworld bureaucracy is prone to occasional oversights and errors. A protagonist may die and appear before the netherworld court, only to find that his was a case of mistaken identity. When the judge determines that he had in fact led a virtuous life, he is released back to the world of the living and the bailiffs responsible for his arrest are punished.

Tale #3 describes how a young woman is struck to death by a thunderclap, the instrument of the Thunder God. Miraculously, she revives and relates that the Thunder God struck her in error, meaning to strike another. Another tale relates how the careless penmanship of the Deity of the Eastern Peak leads to the arrest of an innocent man, who is subsequently cleared when the former realizes his error.

Tale #15 describes the bureaucratic chaos that ensues when a woman dies in Hangzhou hundreds of miles away from her native place of registry in Shandong. The Hangzhou Deity of Wall and Moats has jurisdictional duty to take her soul into custody. However, since the pertinent registers are located in Shandong (and presumably the soul has failed to follow the procedure noted above), he is unable to act, and the woman

consequently is unable to die without reviving shortly after. Finally a local scholar comes to her aid and petitions the Deity of Walls and Moats of her place of registry to send her soul to Hangzhou, after which she is finally able to die.

2.4 Structure of the Netherworld in “The Precious Records”

Next I will briefly outline the underworld as conceived in the *Precious Records*, a collection which provides perhaps one of the most systematic accounts of the functions and structure of the Chinese netherworld. This work, generally thought to have been compiled and first published during the Song dynasty, circulated in various editions throughout the following millennium and into modern times. It is considered to belong to a genre of exhortatory literature called *shanshu* 善書, or “morality texts” which flourished during the Ming and Qing dynasties and whose motive for compilation was to provide moral instruction as well as serve as a reminder to the populace that the netherworld was very real, and its punishments harsh indeed.

During the late imperial period this work enjoyed wide circulation and popularity, and had broad appeal among the various social classes due to the inclusion of graphic illustrations of the punishments and hells described within.³² Although we may not know for certain whether Lu Qi had ever read this work, we may assume that he, as a member of the seventeenth century Chinese society, was at least familiar with its description of the netherworld.

³² It should be noted, however, that the content of the illustrations of the hells sometimes diverge from the descriptions in the text itself. One particularly noticeable instance is the “Terrace for Gazing at one’s Home” (*wangxiangtai* 望鄉台), depicted in the illustration of the fifth hall but not mentioned in the text.

The netherworld of the *Yüli*³³ is conceived of as a system of ten courts or halls of judgement, located at the bottom of a great ocean deep within the earth. Each court is presided over by one of what are known popularly as the Yama Kings of the Ten Tribunals (*Shi Dian Yanwang* 十殿閻王), or more simply the Ten Kings (*Shi Wang* 十王).

The first hall is ruled by King Qinguang 秦廣王, who keeps records of the deeds of all persons in the world of the living. Upon death, a person's soul is brought here for a preliminary screening. The souls of those whose evil deeds outweigh their virtuous deeds are brought to the Terrace of the Mirror of Mortal Sin (*Nie Jing Tai* 孽鏡台) on the left side of the hall, where the sinner may see his former life with his sins and the punishment awaiting him. After reflecting for some time the soul is then brought to the second hall for judgment and punishment. Those whose good deeds outweigh the bad are immediately sent to the tenth hall to be reborn into the human path.

The second hall is ruled by King Chujiang 楚江王 and is divided into sixteen hells, each bespeaking a particular brand of torment: stinking manure pools, hunger, thirst, being hacked to pieces, and frozen in ice and snow. In these hells are punished those who have defrauded others in matrimonial agreements, quack doctors, and those that have enticed others to enter the Buddhist priesthood.

The ruler of the third hall is King Songdi 宋帝王, and this hall also contains sixteen hells of torture, including chopping off of the hands and feet, tearing out the fingernails and extracting the heart. Among those who are punished here are ungrateful

³³ I have drawn the data for this section from Clarke's 1898 translation of the *Yüli* and from Maspero 1981 pp. 176-181.

scholars and mandarins with impure motives, unfaithful wives and concubines, grave robbers and tax evaders. Once a person's term in the hell corresponding to the severity of his crime has been completed, he is then passed on to the fourth hall.

King Wuguan 五官王 presides over the fourth hall. This hall is also divided into sixteen hells, including tortures such as cutting the sinews and bones, wearing iron clothes, and plucking out the eyes. Those who possess medicinal cures but refuse to give them to the poor, use false scales, water rice to make it swell before selling, or commit similar petty crimes must suffer all of the sixteen hells, whereupon they are sent to the fifth hall for further punishment.

King Yanluo 閻羅王, or Yama, is the president of the fifth hall. He is the supreme judge of the netherworld, and presides over a series of sixteen hells reserved for those who are guilty of some of the greatest religious sins: unbelief in rewards and punishments, destroying life, burning good books, and so on. The guilty party is first sent to the "Terrace for Gazing at one's Home" (*wangxiangtai* 望鄉台) where he may see the misfortune his evil deeds have brought to his families since his death. He is then sent to the hell corresponding to the nature of his crime and his heart is plucked out and cut into pieces. Thereupon he will be sent to the sixth hall.

In the sixth hall, King Biancheng 卞城王 punishes those who are guilty of sacrilege: cursing heaven and earth and the wind and rain, destroying idols, depositing refuse near temples, and defiling or abusing the Chinese written character. The sixteen hells over which King Biancheng presides include kneeling upon iron fillings, being pounded in a mortar, and flaying the skin. Once appropriately punished here, the guilty soul will be sent on to the seventh hall.

The Taishan King 泰山王 presides over the seventh hall, which contains sixteen small hells, including being flayed alive and carried off by pigs, extracting finger and toe nails, and being eaten by wild animals. Here guilty parties are punished for sins such as stealing the clothes of the dead, interfering in burial, selling a deceased son's wife for a concubine or slave, and trafficking in or knowingly consuming human flesh during famines. Once punishment is completed, the soul is then sent to the eighth hall.

In the eighth hall, King Dushi³⁴ 都市王 presides over the punishment of those who are ignorant of filial piety, neglecting their parents while alive and failing to bury them while dead. When the souls of the damned arrive here, demons with the heads of oxen and the bodies of horses will cast them into one of the sixteen hells, including injuring by carriage accidents, cutting open the stomach, and drowning in a pool of bloody filth. In due time they will then be reborn as beasts.

The president of the ninth hall is King Pingdeng, who presides over sixteen subhells reserved for abortionists, pornographers, and arsonists.³⁵ Punishments include roasting the body, biting by ants and venomous insects, and having one's head steamed and the brains extracted. After fifteen years in each of the sixteen hells, those who committed the above crimes are sent to the Avici Hell³⁶ to suffer tortures ten times worse.

The tenth king is King Zhuanlun 轉輪王, or the "King Who Makes the Wheel of Transmigration Turn", who presides over the exit from the netherworld. In this hall there are six bridges over one of which souls must pass to their next phase of existence. The

³⁴ The illustrations portray King Pingdeng as the president of the eighth hall, and King Dushi as the president of the ninth.

³⁵ The illustrations of the hells of the ninth hall also show that taking of animal life is punished here.

³⁶ A hell with no means of escape where sinners must suffer for hundreds of millions of years.

souls of those who enter this hall are ground in the wheel of life³⁷, apportioned a new bodily form, and the duration of their existence in their new form is determined according to their destruction of life in their past incarnation. Their names and likenesses are entered into record books, and they are then given a potion by Dame Meng 孟婆 which will cause them to forget their entire past and their suffering in the hells, at which time they are sent over one of the six bridges leading to 108,000 roads and on to their next incarnation.

We may see from the above that it is quite possible that Lu Qi and the compiler of the *Precious Records* drew from the same popular understanding of hell. It is obvious, though, that these beliefs must have been fairly fluid, or at least that the netherworld represented in *Ming Bao Lu* was not constrained by the structure set forth in the *Precious Records*. Of the various kings of the ten halls described in the *Precious Records* only two are mentioned specifically, though not by their proper names, in *Ming Bao Lu*: the Netherworld Princes of the Third and Sixth Halls.³⁸ The rest when they appear, are referred to generically as “Netherworld Princes” with no details given as to the particular hall over which they preside. Lu Qi may also have assumed that there was no need for scrupulousness in the details since his readership would be able to fill in the missing information with their own common shared cultural knowledge.

2.5 Retribution in “Ming Bao Lu”

I have noted above that *Ming Bao Lu* displays a diversity of plot and thematic material in its description of the netherworld. Taken as a whole, however, its

³⁷ See tale 8, p. 63.

³⁸ *Yüli* refers to the presiders as “Kings” 王, whereas in *Ming Bao Lu* they are referred to as *Yanjun* 閻君, which I have translated as “Netherworld Prince”.

overwhelming preoccupation is with the Buddhist notion of karmic retribution. Quoting Gjertson:

In Buddhism each act of a person has a consequence: good acts produce good consequences, while evil acts produce evil consequences. Although influenced by the ethical balance of previous good or evil actions, one's lot in life is not a function merely of the workings of an inexorable karmic causation beyond one's power to control, for one can help to mitigate the consequences of past actions and also strive toward an improved condition in the future by acting in accordance with ethically proper standards of behavior³⁹.

The tales in the collection dealing with karmic retribution typically take one of two forms: 1) a strange incident which occurred in Hangzhou or the surrounding counties is narrated and followed by a brief commentary on the karmic significance of the incident; 2) a protagonist loses consciousness and later revives, and relates a visit to the netherworld where he is told of his past karma.

The moral precepts which govern retribution in *Ming Bao Lu* are fairly simple compared to those seen in some Buddhist miracle tales. For example, Tang Lin's conception of what constituted good and evil was based on the Buddhist five precepts (*wu jie* 五戒), according to which Buddhists were expected to refrain from 1) taking human or animal life, 2) taking what is not given, 3) improper sexual conduct, 4) speaking falsehoods, and 5) use of intoxicants.⁴⁰

In Lu Qi's collection, however, the evil deeds for which retribution could be expected do not appear to be solely informed by any particular religious creed. To be sure, the taking of life is one of the most serious crimes, and we see that such an act invites recompense in seven of 28 tales. Next is the crime of cheating others out of money, which we see in four of the tales. One tale, however, shows how a servant brings

³⁹ Gjertson 1998, p.119.

⁴⁰ Gjertson 1989, p. 126.

calamity upon himself for an act as mundane as running away from his master. Yet another tale relates how a Buddhist nun incurs the enmity of a dead man by visiting his house without invitation, and for some twenty days thereafter spits up blood without end.

Death is usually the retribution meted out for the most serious of crimes. In three of the tales, evildoers are struck to death by a thunderclap, a manifestation of a thunder deity whose role is not elaborated upon in the text. In other tales, those who killed living beings go mad and commit suicide or are visited by the ghosts of those whom they wronged, and die suddenly sometime later. For the crime of cheating another out of money one protagonist is reborn as a dog.

The acts which receive good retribution are also quite diverse. Good works done in secret, meritorious acts such as helping a blind man cross a bridge, and obeisance made earlier in life to the Deity of the Eastern Peak allow protagonists to have their life spans extended when they are judged in the netherworld. Supporting a monk with food and lodging brings to one pious believer the blessing of a son who later becomes a high official, and respect shown to the Daoist Deities of Heaven, Earth, and Water save a man from death at the hand of the Thunder Deity.

CHAPTER 3

SOURCE AND AUDIENCE

3.1 Questions of Belief

We have seen above that *Ming Bao Lu* contains a wealth of religious lore regarding the netherworld and retribution, and we may well ask the question as to whose beliefs are represented by this collection, and if the collection offers any insights into the beliefs of ordinary people. The only textual evidence available upon which we may base any definite conclusion, besides that to be found within *Ming Bao Lu* itself, comes from two sources, the prefaces to the *Ming Bao Lu* and Ji Yun's commentary on individual collections of *zhiguai* tales in the *Siku Quanshu Zongmu Tiyaoyao* 四庫全書總目提要.

The undated preface to *Ming Bao Lu*, written by a Mr. Cao of unknown dates, states:

Talk of the *yin* and *yang* [realms]⁴¹ and spirits and ghosts are that which scholars do not discuss. Master Lu Lijing, however, discussed [such things] resolutely, and I have followed and echoed his views In his heart Master Lu was deeply concerned with the idea of causing others to awaken [to the truth] and be saved, [and therefore] he did not dare to draw on past precedent or cite [incidents which occurred] far away. [On the contrary], over [a period of] more than ten years he selected from [places] nearby [those incidents] which he [personally] encountered with his eyes and ears; the authentic among that which he saw and heard he wrote down and verified. Though his writing is not elegant, he wished to cause fierce men and weak women to change their ways, restrain themselves, and come to a full understanding of his intent.... Mr. Wu of the Studio of Honest Speech (*E Zhai* 訥齋) heard about this [collection], found it to be good, provided financial assistance and undertook the arrangement [of its publication], making Lu Qi's main ideas widely known. He proclaimed to people far and wide the means by which they might clearly understand [the true consequences of] gains and losses,⁴² and thereby gave ever greater encouragement to those who help others to improve their conduct.

⁴¹ Referring to the netherworld and the world of the living respectively.

⁴² That is, that illicit gains do not go unpunished in the afterlife.

Though it is difficult to gauge the general response to Lu Qi's collection at the time it was published, we may at least see from the above that the beliefs contained in *Ming Bao Lu* found a ready audience among at least some of the literate class, and apparently, among one of that class who was sufficiently moved by these views and had the financial wherewithal to subsidize the printing of the collection.

In his brief commentary on *Ming Bao Lu* in the collection of bibliographic essays written for the *Annotated Catalogue of the Complete Library of Four Treasuries* (*Siku Quanshu* 四庫全書), Ji Yun (1724-1805) writes: "As for this compilation, it is all records of the supernatural path and matters of cause and effect (i.e., karma). Its main idea is to exhort [others] to be good."⁴³

It is known that Ji Yun did not hesitate in his essays to criticize strongly those works which he considered ambiguous in didactic intent or harmful to morals.⁴⁴ Although *Ming Bao Lu* was not ultimately copied into the *Annotated Catalogue*, presumably because, as Ji Yun states, "Its veracity can not be established", his annotation evidences a tacit agreement with Lu Qi's moral views.

For further evidence we must examine the tales themselves. First, the sources of two of the three testimonial accounts are persons with an established connection to Lu Qi. The source of tale #2 is the uncle of the stepmother of a friend of Lu Qi, and the source of tale #8 is a schoolmate of Lu Qi's younger brother, Lu Pei. In both of these cases the source is a member of the literate class.

⁴³ Ji Yun, *juan* 144, *zi bu* 子部.

⁴⁴ Chan 1989, p. 182.

For those tales in which the protagonist or his later incarnation was still alive at the time the tales were recorded, the sources are mostly scholars and officials, or at least persons demonstrably literate.

The remainder of the tales poses a problem, since they are neither testimonial accounts, nor does Lu Qi indicate how he came to hear them. And moreover, any analysis is of course predicated on the assumption that Lu Qi did, as the preface claims, record only those things which he could verify. The only information we have at our disposal to determine the veracity of these tales is that which is supplied out of common convention, i.e., names, places of registry, occupation, age, etc. However, we must allow for the possibility that these were not entirely accurate. As Alan Barr has noted:

Authors of tales of the supernatural had always been keen to convey the impression that they were faithfully recording incidents of which they or their informants had personal knowledge. Hong Mai, for instance, punctiliously noted the names of his informants, and in the preface to one of his collections, stressed the pains he had taken to confirm the veracity of his accounts. There was a marked reluctance to invent details about characters, so that an anecdote might well begin: "A native of Langye 琅邪, surnamed Wang 王, whose name is forgotten, lived in Qiantang 錢塘"... At times, Pu Songling presents himself as an orthodox exponent of the unassertive, conscientious approach to his material, but on occasions he is simply adopting this guise to disarm the reader.⁴⁵

It is possible that Lu Qi himself had doubts about the veracity of the remainder of the tales, since no further information is given beyond these details. Since the locus of the action of all but one of the tales is a county of Zhejiang Province, it is likely that the tales were transmitted first as Zhejiang area lore, and then written down by Lu Qi.

Of the protagonists of the tales, sixteen are scholars or officials; six are members of the lower classes: a servant, a cook, a soldier, and so forth. The occupations of the rest are unstated. If it is true that these tales first circulated as lore, then it is obvious that they

⁴⁵ Barr, 1983, pp. 251-252

originated in many cases in the houses of commoners, perhaps first as gossip, then as tales of strange events which gradually took on karmic overtones as they passed from person to person.

3.2 The Role of the Translator

Lastly, I would like to devote some space to discussing the role of the translator of such a work as *Ming Bao Lu*. Since the tales in Lu Qi's collection are narrated not as fiction or parody, but as real events, we may gather that Lu Qi expected the reader, in cases where he has not made the connection explicit, to: 1) understand intuitively the relation between cause and effect: a person's good or bad actions lead without exception to a good or bad result in this life or the next; and 2) accept, in the absence of personal experience, that the workings of the netherworld – and the supernatural in general – are in fact just as they are portrayed.

The modern Western audience in particular lacks the religio-cultural background that Lu Qi's contemporary readership had, and will not necessarily take for granted the connection between karma and retribution, perhaps finding much of what Lu Qi relates bizarre and in some extreme cases, repellent. Material dealing with the workings of the underworld and the behavior of the soul upon death is likely to be equally as exotic.

I have kept in mind, however, that the Western literary/religious tradition is certainly not lacking in didactic works in which strange occurrences and the moral actions of humans are portrayed as intimately connected. Such works as the tales of saints and the Venerable Bede's history are filled with miraculous and supernatural events; the *Gesta Romanorum* even appends lengthy commentaries to the accounts of the strange

explaining how their didactic implications can be most effectively applied in sermons on proper moral behavior. Just as the above works belong to their time and place, so, too is *Ming Bao Lu* an objective record of the religious beliefs of the author and some among his contemporaries, and should be considered within this context.

As regards the translation of such a work, the question may arise: how might the translator resolve the contradictions inherent in bringing across to a skeptical modern audience a collection of supernatural tales recorded as pious fact or as exemplar accounts directed at other people? How can the translator be responsible not only to the original text, and bring about as faithful a rendering as possible, while still remaining responsible to the modern reader?

As the translator of *Ming Bao Lu*, I have faced these seemingly contradictory requirements and more. I must not only be mindful of Lu Qi's aim in compiling the text and responsible thereto, but also be responsible to the modern Western reader of English as well as those readers who will be expecting a reasonable amount of sinological rigor in my version. On the one hand, my translation must be literal enough to demonstrate a sufficiently thorough understanding of the grammar, syntax, and vocabulary of the source language -- to follow, where possible, the conventions of the scholarly "trot"-- while still, on the other hand, rendering the original into the target language in such a way that the content is not obscured by the apparatus.

With regard to the first requirement, I would like to comment on Lu Qi's intended audience. Chan has shown that the belief in supernatural occurrences has been challenged by skeptics at least since the time of the Han philosopher Wang Chong 王充(27-91); the "no-ghost" theory (無鬼論) espoused in the writings of Ruan Zhan 阮瞻(210-263) was

cited frequently by partisans in eighteenth-century debates concerning ghosts.⁴⁶ It would appear that Lu Qi himself has not made a particularly convincing case for the skeptical among his own readership, as in 26 of the 28 tales he has done little more than observe the popular *zhiguai* and *chuanqi* convention of giving the location of the story, the names and places of registry of the main protagonist, and the year in which the tale occurred; only two of the tales include a lengthy commentary on the historical research Lu Qi undertook to determine the veracity of the tales, and even that is inconclusive as he freely admits. Moreover, only three of the tales are testimonial accounts by a third person raconteur, and as I have mentioned earlier, in seven of the tales, the only corroborating evidence of the truthfulness of the accounts is that it is claimed that the protagonist, or his offspring (or in tale number 23, his later incarnation) is still alive. The skeptical Chinese reader of *Ming Bao Lu* was essentially required to suspend disbelief unless he was able to demand corroboration of the tales' veracity from the source of the account.

It is likely, though, that in the 17th century, as Chan has shown to be the case even in the 18th century, considered by some scholars to be the dawn of a "Chinese enlightenment", that critiques of the supernatural were not systematic or thoroughgoing; oftentimes writers showed a reluctance to reject supernaturalism completely, and even the most radical among them evinced an unresolved ambivalence.⁴⁷ By 1661, when Lu Qi wrote the preface to *Ming Bao Lu*, literature written in the vernacular language had been flourishing for several centuries, however he chose to write in the literary language, effectively limiting the audience of his work to the small segment of the population that

⁴⁶ Chan 1993, p. 29.

⁴⁷ Chan 1993, p. 35.

had received a classical education and might be aware of the epistolary debates among the elite on the question of belief or disbelief in the supernatural.

As Lu Qi does not acknowledge such a debate either in his preface or in the main body of the text, we may assume that Lu Qi's intended readership included members of the Hangzhou literary circles in which he traveled, whose positions were already known to him and who needed no further persuasion.

The publishing history of *Ming Bao Lu* yields several more clues. Lu Qi's preface to the collection is dated the summer of the *xinchou* 辛丑 year of the Shunzhi reign period (1661). However, no original copies from that time are known to exist; the earliest extant copy of the text is that included in an 1825 printing of Wu Zhenfang's *Shuo Ling* with an undated preface written by a Mr Cao, in which it is noted that publication was made possible through the financial largesse of a Mr. Wu of the Studio of Honest Speech 訥齋 who "heard about the text and found it good". We do not know, therefore, when exactly the first publication took place, or if it was distributed beyond Lu Qi's immediate circle of acquaintances during his lifetime. The local gazettes and other primary historical sources I have consulted for biographical information on Lu Qi do not mention *Ming Bao Lu* among his published works, suggesting that the work was unknown to the compilers, possible because it existed only in manuscript form.

It is also quite probable that at the time Lu Qi had more pressing affairs to deal with than the arrangement for the publication of *Ming Bao Lu*. As I have mentioned above, in 1662, shortly after Lu Qi completed the compilation of the text, he was implicated the Ming History case 明史案, and shortly after his release he converted to

Buddhism and disappeared in 1668, purportedly to Mt. Wudang 武當山, and was never heard from again.

On the basis of the above evidence, I conclude that *Ming Bao Lu* was originally intended to be distributed amongst Lu Qi's circle of friends and acquaintances, and did not reach a wider audience until the publication of the edition financed by Mr. Wu, a copy of which may have been the basis for Ji Yun's review in the *Annotated Catalogue* during the final decade of the 18th century.

I also consider that Lu Qi, as he claims in his preface, functioned only as a recorder; there is nothing to suggest that considerations of creativity or artistic expression played a part in his writing. Most of the tales contain little in the way of imagery or dialogue, much less character development or insight into a protagonist's psychological makeup. These are by and large brief tales with a moral message. Therefore, I see my role as the direct conduit between Lu Qi and the modern Western audience; to this end I have attempted to preserve his narrative voice while being as unobtrusive as possible. As Lu Qi makes his presence known to the reader by inserting commentary into the narrative at points where he deems it necessary, or at the end of the stories, I too have only interrupted the narrative to elucidate concepts with which the Western reader could not be expected to be familiar.

Take for example the following introductory sentences to story #17, Instructor Zhou:

海寧 雒塘 文學 周 某 甲午 病
Haining /Luotang/ Instructor/ Zhou/ someone/ year 31 in the sexagenary cycle/ became ill
故。止 遺 一 子。次 年 復 夭
died. Only/ left/ one/ son. Next/ year/ again/ died young.

A literal translation might read “Instructor Zhou of Luotang, Haining County fell ill and died in *jiawu* (1654). He only left one son. The following year he also died.”

In this case the original syntax requires little modification; the last two sentences can be rendered into a gerund phrase and relative clause, respectively, to give: “Instructor Zhou of Luotang, Haining County, fell ill and died in 1654, leaving only one son, who also died the following year.”

However, in some cases, quite a bit of additional information is required. A passage from story #20, Sun Bomou, illustrates this:

是 日 起 太 早。尚 四 更。待 飯 未 熟。假寐。
This/ day/ got up/ too/ early. Still fourth watch. Waited for rice not yet cooked. Dozed off.
即 有 人 喚。至 一 殿 前。榜 曰 森羅 殿。
Then/ there was/ a man/ called. Arrived at/ a/ hall/ before. Tablet/ said/ Senluo/ hall.

A literal translation might read: “This day he got up too early. It was still fourth watch. He waited for the rice to cook. He dozed off. Then there was a man calling him. He arrived before a hall. The tablet read ‘Senluo Hall’.” I have translated it: “This day he had gotten up too early, and it was still only three o’clock in the morning. As Sun Bomou waited for [the street vendors’] rice to cook [so that he could take his breakfast], he dozed off and [dreamt that] there was someone calling him. He arrived before a hall [upon which hung] a tablet that read, “Senluo Hall”

Si jing 四更 (fourth watch) denotes the time from one to three o’clock in the morning. Although a visitor to China will note that even now many Chinese awake very early in the morning, to avoid confusion I have translated this as “three o’clock”, which is the latest time that the original Chinese will allow, but also not so early as to seem unusual to a modern reader. I have also included additional information unstated in the

original but necessary for the logical flow of the narrative in brackets, and explained in a footnote that “Senluo Hall” is traditionally the fifth hell in the netherworld over which King Yama, or Yanluo Wang 閻羅王, presides.

Lastly I would like to make a few remarks regarding my responsibility to the modern Western reader. Written language allows ideas to survive the deaths of the minds that bore them, and therefore the translator’s duty is not to be a cultural critic, or make judgment on the ideas contained in the text, but to ensure that they survive the death of the author without regard to the worth of the ideas as perceived by his contemporary audience. I have noted that the modern reader may find some of the content of *Ming Bao Lu* bizarre and even repellent. As the task of translating of the text has demanded that I bear responsibility, I, in turn will make a small request of the skeptical reader: If he can but suspend judgment, and see past the supernatural content of this text, he will see that at its very core is an attempt at moral instruction not so very different from that found in tracts of other organized religions, Christianity included. Some of the basic virtues which Lu Qi advocates--filial piety, good works, respect shown to superiors--as well as the sins which bring calamity upon oneself--disloyalty, unscrupulousness, and the taking of life--can be considered universal human values; it is only the supernatural mechanism by which people are encouraged to do what is right that is culture-specific.

3.3 Translator’s Notes

I have included in this introduction brief explanations of those concepts which reappear with regularity, such as the Earth Deity and the Deity of Walls and Moats so as to minimize the distraction which lengthy footnotes in the body of the translation might

cause. To this end I have also included an index of place names and indicated the geographical proximity to Hangzhou of each identifiable place of action as well its administrative status in both the Ming era and the People's Republic of China. Moreover, to avoid awkwardness I have scrupulously tried to avoid transliteration of terms: *hun* 魂 and *po* 魄, for example, are translated as “ethereal soul” and “corporeal soul” respectively as noted above. From time to time Lu Qi interrupts his own narrative voice to provide commentary. I have used italics for such commentary and placed it in parentheses.

In his preface Mr. Cao notes that Lu Qi's style is inelegant. Whether or not this is so is a question better answered by Lu Qi's scholarly contemporaries. I myself have only attempted to avoid egregious inelegance while still remaining faithful to the original diction. It is my hope that this translation may serve as a tool for future translators of Lu Qi: that it may provide an accurate reproduction of difficult grammatical constructions and folk religious concepts upon which others may base more elegant versions.

CHAPTER 4

PREFACES

4.1 Cao Wuyi's Preface

Talk of the *yin* and *yang* [realms]⁴⁸ and spirits and ghosts are that which scholars do not discuss. Master Lu Lijing, however, discussed [such things] resolutely, and I have followed and echoed his views. Was Lu Qi's aim in making this book [like] Jia Yi's discussion [of ghosts] in the Xuanshi Hall,⁴⁹ or that of Qi Xie in the *Zhuangzi*?⁵⁰ No. In his heart Master Lu was deeply concerned with the idea of causing others to awaken [to the truth] and be saved, [and therefore] he did not dare to draw on past precedent or cite [incidents which occurred] far away. [On the contrary], over [a period of] more than ten years he selected from [places] nearby [those incidents] which he [personally] encountered with his eyes and ears; the authentic among that which he saw and heard he wrote down and verified. Though his writing is not elegant, he wished to cause fierce men and weak women to change their ways, restrain themselves, and come to a full understanding of his intent.

⁴⁸ Referring to the netherworld and the world of the living respectively.

⁴⁹ This refers to a passage in *Shiji* 史記 in which Emperor Wen of the Han Dynasty asks statesman and man of letters Jia Yi 賈誼 (200-168 B.C.) about the origin of ghosts and spirits, an episode that takes place in the Xuanshi 宣室 Hall of the imperial palace. This incident is also alluded to in the Tang dynasty poem "Jia Sheng" 賈生 by Li Shangyin 李商隱, in which Emperor Wen is criticized for his frivolous preoccupation with the supernatural and disregard for the livelihood of the people. (*Shiji* 史記, 屈原賈生列傳)

⁵⁰ The "Free and Easy Wandering" (*Xiaoyau You* 逍遙游) chapter of the eponymously titled writings of Zhuangzi (369-286 B.C.) contain the first recorded reference to *zhiguai*, or "recording the anomalous". The passage is typically translated "Qi Xie was a recorder of anomalies", although some scholars have suggested that Qi Xie could also be the title of a now-lost collection of *zhiguai* writings. The implication seems to be that Lu Qi is not setting down anomalous accounts merely for the sake of documenting the unusual.

Within are narrated [tales of] noble minded and benevolent men who become immortal and achieve salvation. Treacherous ministers and unfilial sons are put to death by the Thunder God, receive punishment in the netherworld, change their forms and later are reborn and return [to the world of the living]. It is as if the ghosts and spirits [really] were functioning there, amusing themselves with their supernatural powers and leading the masses of living beings to erect proper beliefs, just like heralds clearing the way for the emperor or the night patroller announcing the evening hour. It is like when you are asleep and you hear someone shouting loudly in your ear, and before you are aware, cold sweat is dripping down your back and you push away the bed covers and get up.

As for this record, if one is made to read it over and over, there must not be one who does not feel grateful and shed tears.

It is said that those whose lot in life is full of frustrations flare up in anger and write books so that they may make themselves known. We two, however, do not share this affliction. Mr. Wu of the Studio of Honest Speech heard about this [collection], found it to be good, provided financial assistance and undertook the arrangement [of its publication], making Lu Qi's main ideas widely known. He proclaimed to people far and wide the means by which they might clearly understand [the true consequences of] gains and losses,⁵¹ and thereby gave even greater encouragement to those who help others to improve their conduct.

Recorded by Cao Wuyi of Jiao Prefecture

⁵¹ That is, that illicit gains do not go unpunished in the afterlife.

4.2 Lu Qi's Preface

Verily, Confucius wiped his face with his sleeve at the capture of the *lin*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* ended [just] where [the incident] began;⁵² [in] other [cases] such as Zuoqiu Ming loss of his sight,⁵³ Yu Qing's poverty and sorrow,⁵⁴ Sima Qian's castration,⁵⁵ and Xi Zaochi's loss of the use of his legs,⁵⁶ it has often been the case that those who harbor anger in their hearts and do not achieve their aims retire and write books and carry out their praise and condemnation through writing and deletion. Presumably if they do not hold the reigns of power, they cannot but rely on empty words so as to make more rigorous the institution of ethical education. A Gentleman takes delight therein.

Though this be the case, how could I be as able [as they]? I have [but] retired and grown old by the West Lake and remained silent, that's all. No matter what Sima Hui⁵⁷ wrote, it was sublime; Xiahou Xuan, however, burned his brush and tossed away his

⁵² The last incident recorded in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, whose authorship is traditionally, but spuriously, ascribed to Confucius, records the capture of a *lin*, a mythical animal whose appearance was considered an auspicious omen occurring only to herald the appearance of a sage king. According to legend, Confucius wept and threw down his brush when he heard that a *lin* had appeared during the time of the Zhou King's misrule, considering this a most inauspicious omen, and never wrote again.

⁵³ Zuoqiu Ming 左丘明 was, according to legend, an official historian of the state of Lu during the Spring and Autumn period (770-476 B.C.), who was completely blind in both eyes when he wrote the work traditionally attributed to him, the *Zuo Zhuan* 左傳.

⁵⁴ Yu Qing (ca. 3rd century B.C.) served as a minister of the court of Prince Xiaocheng of Zhao, but retired from public life after his advice went unheeded by the latter. He reportedly lived out the rest of his days in poverty. Sima Qian 司馬遷 writes in *Shiji*, "Were it not for Yu Qing's poverty and sorrow, he would not have been able to write books and show himself to later generations." (*Shiji* 史記, juan 76, 平原君虞卿傳).

⁵⁵ Sima Qian (ca. 145-86 B.C.), one of the authors of *Shiji* 史記, or "Records of the Historian" was employed as a historian at the court of Emperor Wu Di of the Han dynasty. The emperor had him thrown into prison and castrated when he came to the defense of General Li Ling 李陵, who had been defeated in battle and surrendered to the Xiongnu border tribes.

⁵⁶ Xi Zaochi 習鑿齒 (d. ca. 384 A.D.) served as the governor of Rongyang 滎陽 County (located in modern Henan Province), but retired after losing the use of his legs. He is known primarily for the work *The Annals of Han and Jin* (*Han Jin Chunqiu* 漢晉春秋).

⁵⁷ According to tradition, Sima Hui 司馬徽 recommended master strategist Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 to Liu Bei 劉備, founder of the Shu 蜀 Kingdom (221-264 A.D.). However, he does not appear to be known for his writings.

ink.⁵⁸ This is exactly what I aspire to for myself. I do not dare to be the recorder of men, but am rather the recorder of ghosts, and this is the reason for writing *Accounts of Supernatural Retribution*.

The *Book of History* says: “To be in accordance with the proper path is auspicious; to follow the contrary [path] is inauspicious.”⁵⁹

The *Book of Changes* says: “Ghosts and spirits will bring harm to the extravagant and bless the humble.”⁶⁰

The *Book of Rites* says: “Where it is bright there is ritual and music. Where it is dark there are ghosts and spirits.”⁶¹

That which I recorded – doing good works causing fortune to descend, and doing evil causing misfortune to descend – undoubtedly accords with the aim of the *Six Classics*.⁶²

I have especially taken up [matters of] roving ethereal souls and the ethereal *qi* from over ten years’ [time]; as to those things which I have seen, I have weighed their veracity, and did not at all make false representations [which might] increase the people’s confusion.

[These things] may be likened to the “spirits descending at Shen”⁶³ or the “stone speaking at Jin”⁶⁴. That such things occur is not without reason!

⁵⁸ Xiahou Xuan 夏侯玄 (209-254 A.D.) served in a number of official positions during the Wei dynasty (220-265). However I have been unable to find any reference to this allusion.

⁵⁹ *Shangshu*, p. 2.

⁶⁰ *Yijing*, p. 11.

⁶¹ *Liji*, p. 99.

⁶² The *Six Classics*, or the “Confucian Canon”, i.e. *The Book of Songs* 詩經, *The Book of History* 書經, *The Book of Rites* 禮經, *The Book of Music* 樂經, *The Book of Changes* 易經, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋, were required texts for a scholarly education in imperial times.

⁶³ This is an allusion to an incident recorded in the 32nd year of Duke Zhuang 莊公 in the *Zuo Zhuan* 左傳. It was reported that spirits descended at Shen, a county in the west of what is now Shandong Province. The Prince of Hui asks his advisors why this happened, and the advisors reply, “When a state prospers, the

If it is possible [to cause others] to have a penetrating understanding of the dark and bright [realms],⁶⁵ and thoroughly comprehend the communication between earth and Heaven and [thereby] cause ghosts to no longer be mysterious,⁶⁶ then that is my prayer.

Nevertheless, [when] Sun Sheng [wrote of the incident at] Fangtou he was placed under house arrest;⁶⁷ human calamities and Heavenly punishments were that which Han Yu feared.⁶⁸

“With my left hand I subdue the souls of those who died young. With my right I hold the ghostly roster.”⁶⁹ Is there any guarantee that the spirit of a lord will not rise and accuse me in the netherworld?

spirits descend in order to inspect its virtue. When a state is about to be destroyed, spirits also descend to observe its evil.”

⁶⁴ This is an allusion to an incident recorded in the eighth year of Duke Zhao 昭公 in the *Zuo Zhuan* 左傳, in which the Marquis of Jin asks his minister Shi Kuang about reports of stones speaking. Shi Kuang replies “Stones cannot speak. Perhaps someone is conveying a message through the stones... I, your servant have heard it said that ‘if projects are undertaken in an untimely way, complaints will rise from the people, so that things which cannot speak will speak’. Now your palace is greatly haunted by ghostly manifestations, and the people’s energy has been worn away so that complaints and resentful speech have been stirred up, and no one can preserve his nature. Is it not fitting that stones should speak?”

⁶⁵ By this he means to understand the connection between worlds of the dead and the living, respectively.

⁶⁶ That is, to understand that evil done without the knowledge of others will still be noted by Heaven and the netherworld, and therefore retribution is assured. In this way ghosts will no longer be mysterious.

⁶⁷ Sun Sheng 孫盛 (302-374), official and historian of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420), recorded the ignominious defeat of General Huan Wen 桓溫 (312-373) at Fangtou in his *Jinyang Annals* 晉陽秋. It is said that Huan Wen thereupon placed Sun Sheng under house arrest until he agreed to delete the relevant passages.

⁶⁸ Han Yu 韓愈, (768-824) a high official of the Tang dynasty, was banished in 819 to the undeveloped southern frontier of China due to his outspokenness in criticizing the emperor.

⁶⁹ This refers to an episode recorded in *Discourses of the States*, where Prince Ling 靈王 asks his advisors how to stop the flow of remonstrances from a certain minister. His advisors reply “If he remonstrates with you again, say to him ‘With my left hand I subdue the souls of those who died young. With my right I hold the ghostly roster. Of the hundred remonstrances I have heard them all, so how could I be willing to hear others?’” (*Guoyu* 國語, j. 17, 楚語上)

Although I keep my distance from human accusation, I will not necessarily avoid receiving netherworldly censure. For this reason I do not dare to aspire [to be] the Dong Hu⁷⁰ of ghosts, but seek only exemption from the ghostly fate of Cui Boshen.⁷¹

Lu Qi (Lijing), compiler

Hangnan, Summer 1661

⁷⁰ Dong Hu 董狐 of the state of Jin 晉 during the Spring and Autumn period, was praised by Confucius for his integrity as a historian.

⁷¹ I have been unable to locate any information on Cui Boshen 崔伯深.

CHAPTER 5

“ACCOUNTS OF SUPERNATURAL RETRIBUTION”, ROLL ONE

Li Huayu [1]

Li Huayu of Shidun Village in the western township of Haining County was a simple and honest farmer who occasionally suffered from fevers. He [once] testified to having seen two emissaries from the Netherworld emerge from beside his pillow. One of them was Cai Youcheng, and the other was Shen Liang. They presented a warrant to Huayu, saying, “Your name is on the list of those who are to die. However, as you have been sincere and kind throughout your life, [we will] wait until the several dozen others on this warrant have been taken into custody, and then come for you last.”

When Cai Youcheng and Shen Liang had gone, a ghost with hair bound into a horn-like knot emerged from the side of Huayu’s pillow. Before Huayu could raise his head to inspect the pillow, a rope was already fast around his neck, and he was dragged off and bound to a large tree in front of the gate of the temple of the Locality Deity and the Stone King. After a while he saw Cai Youcheng and Shen Liang leading several dozen others who were bound and stripped to the waist. Cai Youcheng castigated the ghost, saying, “What sort of a creature are you, seizing others for nothing? [You, too, think you can] come to make the arrests?” and with that he struck the ghost one blow to the face and the ghost disappeared.

He then said to Huayu, “Though the laws of the Netherworld are strict, those whose names come slightly further down on the list, however, can hang back and plan their escape. We two took pity on you and didn’t carry out the arrest right away.

[However] we didn't expect that this ghost would first take you into custody and deliver you [to us]. We were just [now] about to escort all of the souls [we have taken into custody] to meet the Locality Deity, but we were afraid that by the time we finished calling out the names your soul would be cold and unable to return, and then we'd have a problem!" They then moved Huayu's soul to another's house and placed it in a coffin [where the] boards could shield it from the wind, saying, "You are fortunate to escape. This place should suffice to cover you up."

When they were done calling out the names [of the prisoners], Cai Youcheng and Shen Liang led Li Huayu out of the coffin and said, "If you walk home uncovered, we're afraid your soul will get cold again. What can we do?"

One of the two then rubbed Huayu's soul into the shape of a rice-flour cake, wrapped it in paper, and tucked it into his sleeve. En route they came across Huayu's family members buying a coffin, and mixing amongst them, the three returned together [to Huayu's house]. When they arrived outside the door, they tossed the soul away.

Just at this time, Huayu came to, and said, "Quick! Prepare paper money, soup, and rice." When Cai Youcheng and Shen Liang had eaten their fill, they said to Huayu, "We two have always taken pity on you and didn't want to arrest and take you away. However, we are spirits of the *yin* world,⁷² and every time we come to take a living person into custody, so distressed are we that we cannot move forward [to carry it out]. There has to be a spirit of the *yang* world⁷³ to act as a guide [for us]. If you can act as our guide, then we will completely spare you."

⁷² The world of the dead.

⁷³ The world of the living.

Li Huayu gave his word, and henceforth, every time Cai Youcheng and Shen Liang [went to] take someone into custody, they would come without fail to Li Huayu, and every time, Li Huayu would lose consciousness [and go over to the *yin* world].⁷⁴

[Previously,] Cai Youcheng and Shen Liang had once gone to a house where there were many relatives gathered keeping watch over a man who was approaching death. The rays from [their collective] *yang* fire⁷⁵ [rose] higher than an inch, and it was terribly difficult to get close [enough to take him away]. Moreover, their time was limited, so they made a sound like a cat chasing a mouse, and when the relatives dispersed to go have a look, they seized the opportunity to bind and take him away.

Another time there were three strong and filial sons of the Niu family who feared that their father was going to die, and drinking with abandon until they were roaring drunk, they sat together and kept watch over their father. [This time] the rays from [their *yang*] fire were several inches high, and the two especially didn't dare to advance. They had no choice but to push over a great wine jar that was in an empty room. It made a great crashing sound, and it was only when the three sons got up, alarmed, to have a look, that the doomed man could be captured. This is how difficult it was for them.

Moreover, of those who were supposed to die, some were born in a different location [from where they resided], and subsequently changed their residence back and forth. [This is troublesome because] the Netherworld death warrant must come down to

⁷⁴ Maspero notes that in Jiangsu province one folk belief holds that the souls of dying men cannot be arrested by beings from the netherworld, even though they hold an official order, unless the soul of another living man is willing to provide help. In such cases the living man falls into a catalepsy, while his soul accompanies the netherworld emissaries, seizes the soul of the dying man, hands it over, and finally returns to his own body and reawakens. See Maspero 1988, p. 182.

⁷⁵ Yang fire (*yanghuo* 陽火): Although this usage is obscure, presumably this is the essence found in the bodies of the living, or those inhabiting the *yang* world, which repels *yin* emissaries Shen Liang and Cai Youcheng.

the Locality Deity of the person's birthplace, then pass through Tranquil Pass⁷⁶ and then [on] to the Locality Deity of the place of illness, and only then can the person be captured. After death, the ethereal soul also [maintains a procedure], first arriving at the place of illness, then going on to the place of birth, and does not deviate from [this] pattern.

[Huayu further testified that] he once saw souls in hell that were slated for reincarnation, and generally they were as big as a soup dumpling and blue-green in color. Whenever a ghost carried them out on a large plate, netherworld ancestors would [try to] snatch [their] sons and grandsons [from the plate], sometimes [struggling so much that] the souls would scatter all over the ground.

[Today] Li Huayu is still alive, and from time to time he [still] loses consciousness [and goes over to the *yin* world, and in his unconscious state] speaks [predictions of] disaster and fortune. This is also anomalous.

Zhong Yuzai [2]

Instructor Zhong Yuzai of Bolu Village in Renhe County was the uncle of my friend Lu Xiangwu's stepmother. He once said, "Among immortals, there are those that say, 'Spirits in human form yearn for life, but corpses yearn for death.' Formerly I fell ill and died, but later revived, and I then came to believe that these words were not false."

According to Yuzai's [account], he made a trip in 1646 to visit his kinsman Zhong Meicheng at Gushu City, where the latter was prefect at the time. Yuzai served [temporarily] as a replacement examiner within Zhong Meicheng's office, [however] during the summer months he was overworked and came down with an illness.

⁷⁶ Tranquil Pass (*Pingguan* 平關) is presumably a pass on the death route, but I have not been able to find any reference to it.

This illness gradually became more and more critical, [until] Yuzai saw that his ethereal and corporeal souls had already left his body. His ethereal soul was only a foot tall, and was dressed in a solemn robe and official cap. Leaning on the soul's left shoulder was Yuzai's dead wife. His ethereal soul turned toward his bed and made obeisance and prayed and begged most anxiously to remain alive. This was [what the immortals meant by] the spirit's "yearning for life".

He then saw his corporeal soul, which was white in appearance and naked, with loosely hanging hair as long as Yuzai's own. It was greatly rejoicing in Yuzai's death, as if it had been relieved of a heavy burden. [For now], wherever its fancy took it, it could roam and amuse itself. [For example,] it once accompanied someone to go buy a coffin, and saw the coffin seller arguing some over the price. It also accompanied someone to enter the Public Order Administrators' office to rent funerary implements. It also saw two dogs lying beside of the hearth. This was [what the immortals meant by] the corpse's "yearning for death".

Yuzai also said that at the time when his breathing had almost stopped, he saw his ethereal soul rise from his abdomen. It was shaped like a soup dumpling and blue-green in color. Gradually it ascended to his navel, and his breathing became more rapid. When it reached his chest and diaphragm, his gasping became coarse. When it reached his throat and the top of his head, his two eyes rolled back and [the soul] became completely stuck in the top of his skull. His skull [then] cracked, and for quite a while it looked like a ruptured stone.

His ethereal soul then separated from his body, and the corporeal soul became differentiated therefrom. Then his breathing finally stopped, and Yuzai thought, "I'm

dead now.” Since his family members had no way of knowing what was happening to him, [he knew that] he had to appear to them in a dream, and only then could they know [that he was still there].

He had only just thought of this idea when [suddenly he found] he was already [back] at home. In the twinkling of an eye, it was as if he had traveled 1000 *li*. However, he was not as he had been in life. Stuck there within his body, he felt the agony of being turned inside out and cut off [from the world]. He saw his uncle, the Duke of Binshi, his private secretary, and his wife Lady Huang speaking as if he were dead. He then simultaneously appeared to them in three separate dreams.

Several days earlier, Zhong Meicheng had sent for an eminent doctor, but he didn’t come at that time because of prior business. Only at this time did he [finally] come, [but when] he inspected Yuzai’s pulse, his vital energy had already been exhausted.

The doctor felt his chest next, and it was still warm. Tentatively he gave Yuzai a pharmaceutical preparation. Yuzai felt a drop fall into his throat, but the rest just gushed out. That which did pass through his throat, [however], was cold as ice, and his heart and bowels [felt] as if on fire. Someone got some ice and snow [to rub on him] and after a moment he felt it quickly penetrate. He then heard a vast amount of something like a wind or fog come falling into his ears, eyes, mouth and nose. After quite some time, a small ethereal soul more than a foot tall came flying quickly back and forth between his brain and ears trying unsuccessfully to enter [his body]. He then saw that the image of his corporeal soul had covered his body.

In an instant the little ethereal soul, with a sound like the shaking of the heavens, burst in from the edge of his brain, and the corporeal soul was [also] recollected and

could no longer be seen. From this time, Yuzai regained his life, and to this day he is still alive.

As for [what his corporeal soul had seen, i.e.] the buying of the coffin and the arguing over the price, the dogs lying in front of the hearth, [as well as Huayu's having appeared in the dreams of] the three people simultaneously, he asked his family about these things, and each was in accordance [with what had actually happened]. He then knew that the principle of the interpenetration of life and death was not just confusion brought on by his illness. We can keep this as a resource in the study of near-death experiences.

The Wife of Official Cui Si [3]

During the final years of the Wanli reign period (1573-1619), the wife of Official Cui Si of Liuqu village in Guian County was about 20 years old. During a great thunderstorm she went to the mouth of the Shibo River to wash some rice and was struck to death by a thunderclap. Carrying her body to their inner apartment, her husband hadn't crossed the threshold when suddenly a thunderstorm broke out. A fragrant vapor filled the room, and his wife thereupon regained consciousness. When Cui Si asked her about this, she said that the Thunder God had intended to strike some other demon, but mistakenly hit her body instead. A spirit gave her a bowl of medicine, and she was then able to come back to life.

Presumably this is because the woman was young and filial.

The Wife of Instructor Chen [4]

The wife of Instructor Chen of Xin City is [now] over 30 years old. In 1653 she returned to her parent's home for a visit. When she arrived at their bean patch, she lost her step and suddenly fainted. As Instructor Chen carried her home, at once a white bird followed behind, and circled in the air within the bedroom for a long time [after they arrived]. When the bird had flown away, his wife made a motion as if punting a boat, and spoke in a ghost's voice, saying, "In a former life you were a boatman. I was an itinerant merchant bearing a heavy load of valuables who was murdered by you. I lodged a complaint against you in the Netherworld court and was granted permission to search after you and avenge this injustice. After [so] many years I did not imagine I would happen upon you at this place. I will certainly not let you go."

Since he was old and had no offspring, and [moreover] his wife had just become pregnant, Instructor Chen beseeched the boatman to put off his sentence, saying, "If my wife can [just] give birth, then I will approach my death without regrets."

The ghost replied, "You, who have done such evil, could I really allow you to have offspring? When sworn enemies meet, could it be possible to put off [revenge] even for a moment?"

Several days later, Instructor Chen finally died.

A Wicked Son Drives His Mother Out [5]

In northern Pingwang County there was a son who drove his mother out and sent her off to [live at] his elder sister's home. His elder sister provided for the mother for several years [until] one day the son arrived again at his elder sister's house. His sister presented him with a peck of rice and ordered him to return home and care for his mother

[himself]. [Just as he and his mother were] halfway home, he pushed his mother into the river, [but] before he arrived home, he was struck and killed by a violent thunderclap and his head was lost. [Meanwhile] his mother had touched down on a shallow place in the river and didn't die. Suddenly she saw her son's head, which she held in her breast as she emerged from the water.

There was also a certain Mr. Wang who was framed by a garrison soldier. He was strung up and tortured to death by bandits, and his house was destroyed. His mother and wife set up a spirit tablet⁷⁷ and wailed most anxiously that they had been wronged. Subsequently the garrison soldier was also struck to death by a thunderclap. Both of these cases occurred on the seventeenth day of the fifth month of 1655. That there should be two such occurrences on the same day is anomalous [in and of itself].

Tianxiang The Monk [6]

During the Wanli reign period (1573-1619), Licentiate Chen Taize of Donglin Mountain, Hu Prefecture, met with a monk who called himself Tianxiang. Over 20 years old, Tianxiang was a native of Shandong who had come south with a grain barge and settled beside Donglin Mountain. He diligently cultivated honest behavior, and for this reason, Chen Taize erected a hut for him. Food, drink, clothing and costume, Chen Taize provided it all for Tianxiang. This went on for several dozen years. Tianxiang once remarked, "How can I repay the patronage I've received from Scholar Chen?"

⁷⁷ This is a tablet to contain the soul of a dead person.

Later, when Tianxiang was over seventy, there was a Xingkong Master⁷⁸ who repeatedly closed himself up in Tianxiang's meditation room. One evening, Tianxiang said to him, "Last night I dreamt I was summoned for an audience at a precinct office, and I stood up [to the officials there] as an equal. The Xingkong Master said, "This idea of yours is wrong."

Tianxiang thereupon came down with a slight illness. Late one day there were suddenly many people surrounding the Chens' gate, and they saw Tianxiang walk straight in. Chen Taize himself, who was in the central hall, also saw Tianxiang. He asked him, "What are you doing, master?"

Tianxiang hung his head and didn't answer, but [instead] entered directly into Chen Taize's bedroom. Just as Chen Taize was pursuing Tianxiang to try to get an answer, his wife gave birth to a boy. He hastened to send someone to Tianxiang's hut to inquire after him, but [they found that] Tianxiang had [already] died.

Later, Chen Taize's newborn son reached the *nazhou* day,⁷⁹ and when he saw Chen Taize's friends, he gave an ingot of silver to those that had been generous to Tianxiang in former days. One man had formerly angered Tianxiang, and the boy shook his fist at him, sufficing to confirm that the boy's inherited nature had not been darkened.

Later, when the boy, whose given name was Yanshu, had grown up, he gave himself the courtesy name Shengxuan. During the twelfth year of the Chongzhen reign period of the Ming Dynasty (1640) he landed his name on the list of successful

⁷⁸ Xingkong 性空, or "Nature Void", is one of the three Nanshan 南山 Buddhist sects which regarded the nature of things as unreal or immaterial, but held that the things were temporary entities (Soothill 1934, p. 259). I suspect that it is used here as a general designation for a Buddhist teacher.

⁷⁹ The one year anniversary of a boy's birth, when, according to tradition, the parents set out various objects with symbolic significance within the boy's reach, and then try to make predictions about the boy's future aspirations according to the object he grabs.

candidates in the provincial examinations, in the seventh year of the Shunzhi reign period (1650), he passed the national examinations and was conferred the office of Magistrate of Yongan County in Fujian. Today he is still serving.

It is said that he had no great wisdom or powers of comprehension in his previous incarnation as Tianxiang, but only studied daily the *Lotus Sutra*⁸⁰ without fail. Moreover, he was sure to make abundant offerings of provisions to traveling masters, and gave himself only wheat husks and boiled barley, quite willing [to eat] tasteless and meager [fare]. Nowadays, the establishment of one's name and position under the examination system and blessed rewards are both thought to originate [thusly].⁸¹

Shen Ziyu [7]

Shen Ziyu, whose given name was Dingxin, was a Licentiate of Hangzhou who resided at Xiangguo Monastery in Youqiao, Chun'an County. After an illness during the fifth month of the summer of 1652, he went to pay a call on a friend. While climbing Wu Mountain, he grew excessively fatigued, and with unsteady step, returned home to lie down.

Right away [he felt] as if his breathing had stopped, and he perceived that his body was as light as if in midair. His ethereal soul followed, rising and falling, through regions dark and distant, and boundless and indistinct in all directions. He walked 100 *li* and arrived at last at a great wilderness. Turning onto a different path, he saw on his left a

⁸⁰ The *Lotus Sutra*, also known by its full title, *The Sutra of the Lotus Blossom of the Marvelous Dharma* (*Miaofa Lianhua Jing* 妙法蓮花經) is an influential text of the Mahayana School of Buddhism. Its two main points are: 1) The only goal for practitioners of the Buddhist path is Buddhahood; and 2) a Buddha, upon attaining nirvana, does not go into extinction, but abides in the world out of compassion for those still in need of teaching (Keown 2003, p.158)

⁸¹ I.e., as the result of good works done in a previous life.

red wall with pink borders, blue-green tiles and vermillion gates. Before him was a boy who led him further inside, and after 100 paces there were halls and houses rising high and lofty extending in length for several tens of *li*.

A succession of doors opened wide onto two corridors of public offices of the thirteen provinces, each province divided into prefectures, each prefecture divided into counties. Those who ran back and forth between them all wore blue clothing and crimson robes, and held account books in their hands, a mass of pushing and swarming bodies so numerous and disorderly that Shen Ziyu and the boy almost couldn't move forward [through them].

Every time they reached a gate, several dozen strong and ferocious men holding dagger-axes and raising shields blocked their way and closely interrogated them. The boy said [each time], "This is the virtuous gentleman of Wulin, Shen Dingxin," and thereupon the two would stoop and enter under the guards' interlaced halberds.

The sign above the first gate read "Heaven and Earth".⁸² Upon inspection, they saw that there was a glittering green and gold color [inside], and there was a strange fragrance in the air.

They then entered another gate framed by a couplet that read, "There where the wheel of life and death turns⁸³ is the portal through which living men and ghosts pass." They entered inside, and it was at once dark and gloomy, then flashing and glowing, and they didn't dare to look up. Just as they were hesitating to move forward, they saw on the left the gate of the Hangzhou Prefectural Office.

⁸² Heaven and Earth, or *qian* 乾 and *kun* 坤, are two of the 64 hexagrams of the *Classic of Changes* (*Yi Jing* 易經).

⁸³ I.e., Samsara, the Buddhist cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth.

Meandering down path after path, they [finally] arrived at a great room where Shen Ziyu came across an old friend, Mr. Wang Zhaoping, who appeared [now] just as he had in real life. After exchanging greetings, Shen Ziyu said, “Now [that] my illness has come to this point, I fear that I have no hope of survival.” Mr. Wang smiled, and said, “No, no. Recently we received orders from the Jade Emperor. Twice every year, in the fifth and twelfth month, we check the record books and examine all of the virtuous people and evildoers under Heaven. The Princes of the Netherworld have examined your virtuous acts and just now want to raise your salary and increase your lifespan. Together with more than 100 others within the [four] seas, you are being conferred a special emolument, and your lifespan is being increased. What’s the use of worrying?”

Shen Ziyu replied, “If I can [just] be exempted from punishment, then that will be enough. How could I hope for anything else?”

Presently the deafening sound of a whip was heard. Everyone said in a tone of veneration, “Now is the time when the Princes of the Netherworld take their seats upon the bench.” The officials of each department all hastened out, and Shen Ziyu followed behind.

When he went out he saw the various Princes of the Netherworld sitting loftily behind a screen and holding writing tablets. Each of the officials hastened below the dais and read out loud the number of virtuous acts committed by each worthy [in their jurisdiction], noting the exact month and day, province and prefecture, right on down to the last detail. Then they did the same for those who committed evil acts. [In instances where] the record books were in error, the Princes of the Netherworld made corrections.

After a number of hours they withdrew. On the next day the [process of] checking the records and making them full and clear was also like this.

Below the dais there were vessels with [boiling] oil, pillars of fire, a forest of swords, and a mountain of knives. Every time a person was placed within them, [their flesh] practically rotted away. Then suddenly their original body would [re]appear to undergo the same punishment once more. Their miserable howling was unbearable to hear. They also saw an endless [procession of] banners and flags, drummers and pipers, and people being received and sent off. The rewards and punishments were most severe, and fearsome in every detail.

At this time Shen Ziyu saw Censor Chen Xuanqian and the Senior Messenger of [my] family, Lu Kunting.⁸⁴ These venerable gentlemen assembled and took their seats in one of the halls. Shen Ziyu went over to see them, and said, “Such moral fortitude as that of Your Honours’ is rare in this world.”

The venerable gentlemen said, “That you, sir, were so kind and humane, principled and proper, that you won the weighty consideration of the Princes of the Netherworld, this is also rare in this world.”

At this time, Mr. Wang Zhaoping emerged and said, “We are [just] lucky that at that time we pledged devotion and did not become ill in youth. Now we are all [netherworld] Palace Assistants. As to your giving up fame and breaking with the world, it may well be said that you, sir, have not done anything to bring disgrace to those who gave you birth.”

⁸⁴ I.e., Lu Qi’s brother Lu Pei. See page 3.

They all wore ceremonial caps and belts, robes and costumery, and their bearing was most impressive and refined. Shen Ziyu's elder brother Fenghuan was also there serving as a record keeper.

(At the time when Fenghuan was dying, he said "The Supreme Emperor commanded that eight people be gathered, and as they were short by one, I was summoned to make up the difference.")

Shen Ziyu also heard that [inhabitants of] two provinces were examined each day [of the examination period]. First the men had to be examined, and when they were done it was the women's turn. This day was the twenty-fifth day of the month, the day of Zhejiang Province's [biannual review].

Also wearing a ceremonial cap, belt, and robe, Shen Ziyu followed the group forward, and shortly afterwards his name was called. He hastened to emerge from the crowd and saw Wang Zhaoping, Chen Xuanqian and [my brother] Kunting all sitting to the side of the Netherworld Prince of the Sixth Hall. The assembled Princes of the Netherworld all said to Wang Zhaoping and the others, "Is this the virtuous gentleman Shen Dingxin?"

The men replied that it was. The Netherworld Prince of the Sixth Hall descended, carried out the ritual courtesies, and then sat and offered Shen Ziyu fragrant and strong-tasting tea in red porcelain bowls.

The Netherworld Prince of the Sixth Hall then said, "Through our investigation [we have found] that you have been filial, friendly, and pure of mind throughout your life. You've never brought ruin upon any man, nor had intercourse with any woman. You haven't any episodes with prostitutes weighing on your conscience, nor have you ever

taken money improperly. You carry out good works in secret and don't strive that others know, and [this is] why your resumé and reputation have blessings in the world of men."

Shen Ziyu replied, "I, Dingxin, fear every day that my crimes may be many, and [only because of this do I] then discipline myself and repent. What moral Power do I have?"

The Netherworld Prince of the Sixth Hall smiled and said, "It is exactly because of this that we have deliberated on extending your lifespan so that you may forever serve as an example to the masses of men."

Shen Ziyu was likely trembling with fear [at this time], and did not presume to accept the honor.

The Netherworld Prince of the Sixth Hall then showed to Shen Ziyu a record book within which were recorded all the things he had ever done from the time when he was young until now, with nothing omitted. There were [even] one or two good works that Shen Ziyu had never mentioned to anyone, and which even he himself had long forgotten.

The Netherworld Prince of the Sixth Hall praised him to the heavens, and said, "Do you, too, know of those among men who do evil throughout their lives but still achieve success and fame? It is exactly because their [moral] reputation is not high that they in death are not [regarded as having been] heroes. Or of those who do good throughout their lives, but are still poor and lowly? It is exactly because they do not involve themselves with success and fame that their standing and reputation themselves are exalted [upon their death]. This is nothing other than the transformative power of rewards and punishments [at work]. For example, you, sir, studied a lifetime [only to pass] the measly provincial examinations. Many times you've succeeded and many times

you've failed. However, it is those who die [having attained no higher status than] Licentiate who will consider your success and fame as great. In conclusion, wealth and rank are like lightning rays- success and fame like bubbles and shadows. Within what is true there is a tinge of what is false. Most regrettably, the empty-headed have not come to realize all of this, so that nowadays punishments have overtaken rewards, as evil acts have good deeds. What's to be done about it?"

Shen Ziyu replied, "Nowadays, that all this misfortune doesn't stop is due to people not turning their hearts from evil to good. They just don't turn their hearts from evil to good. This results from lewdness and wanton extravagance. I don't think that even the Theocrat On High can do anything about it."

The Netherworld Prince of the Sixth Hall said, "True, true. When you return to the world of the living, you can do the best you can under the circumstances to help the people to see what is right: that learning to be a good person is no more than a matter of [heeding] these twelve words, "Do not that which is evil, but pursue that which is good". One's thoughts must begin from this [point]. Moreover, recompense for good and evil is in fact not false, and this does not leave anyone out. The hundred ways that people may dress up and adorn oneself are of no utility here. As a living person, you should severely spur others [so that] they do not believe [for a minute] that the ghosts and spirits can be fooled."

Shen Ziyu said, "How could I dare to not accept this command?"

Thereupon he took his leave and went out, and Wang Zhaoping and the rest sent him on his way. As he approached the path [back to the world of the living, those who

had been keeping watch over him] heard him suddenly open his mouth and speak from his bed, "I want to go to Xiangguo Monastery."

Shortly afterward, he indeed came to. Presumably this episode occurred during the time from the nineteenth to the twenty-fifth day of the fifth month. Shen Ziyu thereupon selected a Buddhist chant, which went, "When I went I was as pure as that, and when I came I was as bright as this. What birth or extinction is there to speak of? When I loosen my grasp [on worldly things] I will instantly be able to walk at my leisure."⁸⁵

Gradually he recovered and got up out of bed. Today, Shen Ziyu is over seventy, with a leaping gait and a spirit as strong as that of a young man.

The Lings' Daughter [8]

Instructor Ling Juji of Hangzhou, whose given name was Cuizheng, was the schoolmate of my younger brother Kunting. He lived at the south end of Xingong Bridge. In the tenth year of the Chongzhen reign period (1637), a daughter was born to him. At first she was healthy, [however] during the seventh or eighth month of 1653, when she had grown to 17 years, she suddenly came down with a strange illness. She appeared as if she had suffered a stroke; her eyes opened wide and her head shook back and forth. Within the space of a meal she began to come to. She said that she had seen a dark object, and then her head had become dizzy and she [felt like she] was about to fall down.

She had recovered for two or three months when the illness suddenly flared up again, and gradually the attacks became frequent. She saw famous physicians from all parts. Some said it was stroke, some said it was excessive buildup of phlegm, some said it was terror-induced epilepsy, some said it was a weakness of the spirit, some said it was a

⁸⁵ That is to say, to transcend the barrier between life and death.

weakness of the liver, and some said that spirits were hidden within her body. She took countless types of medicine, but ultimately none had any effect

During the fourth month of 1655 she turned 19, and every time the illness flared up, it was even worse. [One time] Juji waited for her illness to flare up and then carefully inspected her, and he perceived that she was faintly murmuring. At first Juji was astonished and tried to talk to her. Suddenly she responded, and the two spoke back and forth with unusual coherence. [It was at this time that] he first came to hear tell of the Karma of grievances from a past life, and then he knew that [this condition] had a connection to ghostly things.

He thereupon specially sought [those who could] bring order to the spirits. As for Buddhist and Taoist priests, shamans and wizards and their methods of offerings and exorcisms and sacrifices of libations and food, there were none that they did not use, and as for medicines for warding off evil and suppressing ghosts, there were none that they didn't give her.

Suddenly a ghost spoke [through her], saying, "I am one whom your daughter wronged in a past life. I have just come from stating my case in the Netherworld. No matter how you may use incantations and spells [against me], ultimately I won't go away."

When they asked the ghost what the origin of her Karmic debt was, as well as the [relevant] places, villages of registry and names, the ghost replied, saying, "At this time I won't say. After a while she herself should know [all about it]."

On the twenty-fifth day of the fifth month, the girl saw the dark-faced ghost from before return escorting a ghost with a pale face. He said, "Tomorrow we will come to

take your soul. On the thirteenth day of the sixth month, when the Netherworld Judge's list is exhibited, you will go for interrogation."

Juji at first did not believe this, but the next day in the afternoon, just as his daughter was sitting among a crowd of people, she suddenly let out a great cry, "The two ghosts have come again, and they've bound and carried off my soul!"

She thereupon once again fainted to the floor. From this time on, she didn't even need to be unconscious to see the two ghosts escorting and dragging her along, and she was not again able to extricate herself. She was no longer able to drink, eat, or sleep, and every time she closed her eyes, the two ghosts would be arguing with her. When Juji and the others tried to speak with her, the ghosts would respond through the girl, and it was as if she was beside them eavesdropping. Thereupon they knew [the whole matter of] the ghosts' intention to exact compensation for the injustice done.

[Speaking through Ling's daughter], the dark-faced ghost related the whole matter from start to finish:

"Originally I was a man of Yangzhou named Ni Ruilong, and the pale-faced one was named Yuan Changru. We two were fellow-villagers from wealthy households who brought lawsuits against each other.

"The Ling girl was [formerly] a Mr. Liu of the Yangzhou Bureau of Investigation. He accepted some silver [as a bribe] from me, [but then] repeatedly tried to have me killed. In prison I was murdered with poison. This is why my face is so dark. Until now I have harbored with all my soul an enmity for sixty years, and today I have come to demand her life [as reparation]. I have no other requests."

Juji asked what had brought on the litigation. His daughter said, “Ruiling had more than fifty *mu* of land. He was going to sell it to Changru, but before the deal was completed Changru took it. At once Changru was worried [that there might be trouble]. He went back and forth on the matter and then gave the land to a large household and said it had already been resold. Ruiling was all out of ideas, and there was nothing he could use to cover his expenses. From this time they became sworn enemies, and brought charges against each other. Now Changru is already dead and he has no offspring. Ruiling, however, has a son who is still alive. His name is Zong something. His words are supported with irrefutable evidence.”

When the girl finished speaking, the two ghosts once again took her off and traveled to the Netherworld. They passed through all of the hells spoken of in this world, such as the Mountain of Knives, Frigid Ice, the Tree of Swords, the Iron Bed, the Polished Mortar and Pestle and the Water-soaking and Rock-crushing Hell, as well as such places as Ghost-gate Pass,⁸⁶ the “Terrace for Gazing at one’s Hometown”,⁸⁷ Dame Meng’s Village,⁸⁸ and The Mountain of Squandered Money.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ This is the pass linking the worlds of the dead and the living.

⁸⁷ The Terrace for Gazing at one’s Hometown (*Wangxiangtai* 望鄉台) is a terrace located in the fifth hall of the underworld to which the guilty are sent, and from which they can look at their home village and see the misfortune that has befallen their family since their death (Maspero 1988, p. 179).

⁸⁸ Dame Meng (*Meng Po Niang Niang* 孟婆娘娘) is a the woman in the tenth netherworld hall who prepares the “Broth of Oblivion”, a potion given to the souls of those about to undergo the process of rebirth so that all memory of previous lives and their experience in the netherworld is obliterated (Maspero 1988, p. 180).

⁸⁹ This is a pile of money burned and sent to the netherworld by the sons and daughters of non-believers in Buddhism, who after a life of violating Buddhist injunctions against the taking of life, drinking of alcohol, etc., while on their deathbed request that money be burned for them in an attempt to redeem their sins. However this method is of no use, and the money ends up here. From 三世因果目蓮救母經。

(It is said that the Naihe Bridges⁹⁰ are only eight inches wide. The bones and flesh of all those that enter the mill [there] are ground up and pulverized piece by piece, and the people scream in anguish.⁹¹ Then they are immediately apportioned new forms for reincarnation and change into animals like insects and ants. The suffering is unspeakable. Presumably in the beginning the earth was as dark as spilled ink. Then after a while, every detail within it could be seen. Or, perhaps in the place where virtuous people and elders roamed, there was a faint light. [This became a place where] lamps and candles shone brightly, and good people dressed immaculately in ceremonial caps and gowns.)

They then came to a place where it was actually as clear as if [illuminated by the] sun and moon. Within a pool were blossoming some white lotus whose fragrance assailed the nostrils. The halls and doors there were green and gold. This was where the most virtuous people were. Beside the main building was a great hall and courtyards. This was the guesthouse of the Netherworld Prince. Within were more than two hundred country gentlemen with high-topped ceremonial caps and wide waistbands. When the girl went among them, some of them made bows with clasped hands. Their words and faces were most virtuous, and she said, "These are old colleagues who passed the imperial examination the same year as I [in my past incarnation as Mr. Liu]. At the moment, [though], I can't remember their names."

There were also those who were supposed to be reborn into the human path of existence, but had not yet attained a vacancy. This type was the most numerous. They

⁹⁰ The Naihe Bridges are two bridges, one for sinners and one for good people, linking the eighth and tenth halls of the netherworld. The bridge that the sinners cross is narrow and has no railing, and crosses over a river of copper snakes and iron fish which attack those who fall off. The bridge for the good people reaches the tenth netherworld hall directly (Eberhard 1967, p. 39).

⁹¹ This appears to be a reference to being "ground in the wheel of life" as mentioned in the tenth netherworld hall in the *Yuli*.

were gathered in one place, and appeared [to be] neither virtuous nor evil. Of the three classes of kinsfolk⁹² [of the Ling girl's former incarnation as Mr. Liu], there were some who were seen, and some who could not be seen, some who spoke with her, and others who didn't speak with her.

The Ling girl also saw her mother from a previous life. She was old and white-haired. Ni Ruilong asked about her, referring to her as "that old woman." The Ling girl again became angry, saying, "The likes of you should call her 'Madame'. How dare you, you devil?"

When Juji heard all of this, he hesitated and suspected it was falsehood, and it was difficult [for him] to believe it. However, he thought to himself, "[Such] talk of avenging grievances is something the world has seen before. I can only file an appeal to the true Deity of Wall and Moats of this prefecture and beg him to distinguish and make clear the rights and wrongs [of this particular case]."

Thereupon in the sixth month he piously went to present his case [at the temple of the Deity of Walls and Moats]. In so many words, he said, "When you kill a person you owe a debt, [so] if in fact it is a real grievance, what could I [possibly] have then to say about it? However, suppose that goblins and monsters have purposely used false words to confuse us and harm her. If she is innocent, I pray that the spirits hear [me] and with their wisdom make this matter clear and bestow a decision."

He also had his daughter pray to Great Master Guanyin⁹³ three thousand times daily and beg her to undo the grievance and release her. On the afternoon of the eighth day of the first month, the girl actually saw two emissaries arrive, saying, "The Deity of

⁹² I.e., the father's clan, the mother's clan, and the wife's clan.

⁹³ Great Master Guanyin is a manifestation of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara who specializes in saving the souls of the dead.

Walls and Moats has issued a warrant.” On the afternoon of the ninth day they came again, and said “Tomorrow after the fifth watch, await trial, and if Yuan Changru looks afraid and trembles, then the Ling girl will then know that this hell might be the doing of this ghost.”

At the fifth watch on the tenth day [of the sixth month], the emissaries indeed arrived escorting the two ghosts, and together with the Ling girl’s soul went to the Deity of Walls and Moats to try the case. They waited for the door to open and [for the Deity of Walls and Moats] to take his seat upon the bench. The three [then] entered and knelt below the dais. Ruilong spoke first, saying, “She [in her previous life] was an official in Yangzhou. She not only accepted my bribes, but also murdered me.”

The Ling girl replied, “It is said that I accepted bribes. Now [of course] I don’t know if I did or not.⁹⁴ However, since I was an official, how could it be that I would go in person to a prison to murder you? Who brought the poison? What kind of poison was it? You should make this clear and only then will I admit [to being at fault].”

Ruilong was somewhat at a loss for words. The Deity of Walls and Moats then said, “Your defense is reasonable. How could [his] life be any business of yours? However, you should not have been corrupt and accepted bribes. Since you were an official and received the court’s salary, how could you illicitly take the people’s wealth? It will be difficult to exempt [you from] this crime.”

He then pointed to Ni Ruilong, and said, “You’ve been a ghost for sixty years, but you don’t [even] know who really murdered you, and instead go around taking others to

⁹⁴ This is presumably because her previous incarnation drank Dame Meng’s potion in the tenth hall of the netherworld, causing her to forget her previous life as well as her experience in the netherworld.

court. Keeping in mind that you lost your life, I'll [be lenient and only] tentatively punish you with five blows of the bamboo slab."

He then pointed at Yuan Changru and commanded him to speak. Changru, however, was trembling, and kept saying, "I don't know about this matter."

Angered, the Deity of Walls and Moats ordered that Yuan Changru be strung up. When Yuan Changru saw the jailers coming to string him up, he [quickly] confessed, saying, "But there were other family members who put in poison!" The Deity of Walls and Moats then released him and punished him with thirty blows of the bamboo slab.

After the interrogation the Deity of Walls and Moats instructed them, "Our bureau does not sentence criminals. In thirteen days, you will still [have to] be interrogated in the [netherworld] hall." and then went out. From this time the Ling girl came to for about an hour. [Such] was the inquest at the fifth watch on the tenth day of the sixth month.

The city god wore a gown of gauze, sable and brocade, and there were lamps and candles and an incense altar. Within the hall the various officials all wore the caps of Court Attendants and debated matters. Below the dais were all official servants who stood with hands cupped before the chest in salutation. The hall and dais were wide and spacious most unlike any temple in this world.

As for the Ling girl, every time her official register was checked, [it was by one who] wore a scholar's kerchief, coarse poplin gown, and vermillion shoes. When there was something to report, [the investigating officials] then knelt down together with the two criminals Ruilong and Changru. When they finished reporting, they stood at the left side [of the dais] and their postures were most unlike that of ordinary people.

After the interrogation, Ruilong came to the Ling family's house, and although he [still was] somewhat resentful, he was bound somewhat [more] loosely [than before] and was [also] somewhat less surly. When he and Changru asked for food, wine, and paper money, their speech was even somewhat sorrowful.

On the evening of the twelfth day, the two ghosts returned and said, "Tomorrow at nine o'clock the Netherworld King of the Third Hall will interrogate you. Be prepared."

Thereupon they stood guard and wouldn't leave. The next morning Juji used kind words to try to make peace between them, and [make them] promise that they would return the girl after the interrogation. He also gave them silver coins and set out food and wine for them. The ghosts disingenuously promised that they would do all [he had asked]. However at seven o'clock the next morning the family saw two emissaries from the netherworld arrive. The Ling girl had heretofore been confined to bed, but at this time she suddenly arose by herself, asked for a change of clothes, and with words of great grief bade farewell to her family. When she had finished speaking, she closed her eyes.

Juji felt and examined her pulse and breathing, which was extremely slow but did not ultimately stop. Her hands and feet were all cold, but her heart and head were slightly warm. He waited and watched her for about an hour, and then he saw her make a face as if crying. A little while later he heard her say, "The sun shines very hot on this road."

(Presumably the time when she was reviving was when the day was just reaching noon.)

A little while later, she said, "You really should go eat." When she finished speaking, she rose slightly and came to. She then said, "The one I was just going to meet was The Netherworld Prince of the Third Palace. To his side were standing the two judges in

charge of virtue and evil. Below the dais were small ghosts and jailers who guarded the gate. They were most ferocious and fearsome, with the heads of oxen and the faces of horses.⁹⁵ I began to hear them calling out the name of the dark-faced one, Ni Ruilong, and next they called a girl named Liu something-or-other.”

(According to Ling Juji's own commentary, it is inappropriate to reveal her personal name [here], however he mentions that her sobriquet was Yutai.)

Next they called Yuan Changru, the pale-faced one. The Netherworld Prince carried out the interrogation and the two judges consulted their official registers. Ni Ruilong and the girl argued and spoke as they had before the Deity of Walls and Moats. One judge pointed at the girl and said in a loud voice, “The matter of [Ruilong's] life doesn't concern you. However, you took 1,200 taels of silver from him, and that's no small amount. So, you still have crimes [to answer for], and we'll not let you return.”

The girl was terrified, and begged for her life, saying, “Though I am guilty, my father and mother in this incarnation gave me life, and I have not once these nineteen years been filial and provided for them. I wish to be released.”

(Presumably this was why she had made the crying face earlier.)

The Netherworld King then said, “Since you have spoken thus, I will release you and let you return. When you leave this time, if you conduct yourself well, you can extend your lifespan. However, if you don't change your ways, you will still receive your punishment.”

Thereupon he issued [the order] to release her and let her return.

As for Ruilong, the Netherworld Prince commanded that he be returned to human form, [but] because of the evil he had done in his life, he [first] punished him with ten

⁹⁵ These are the standard guards in the Chinese netherworld.

blows of the bamboo slab and warned and admonished him. As for Changru, the Netherworld Prince did not punish him [with blows], but rather commanded that he be put in prison and punished with a ten-year sentence. Then he commanded the two ghosts to escort the girl back home.

The girl thereupon got out of bed and anxiously commanded that paper money be burned⁹⁶ and offerings of rice and soup be made to [the two ghosts] as a send-off.

They then carried out as they had before⁹⁷ two altars' worth of *yankou* offerings⁹⁸ to release the souls of the two ghosts from suffering, but the ghosts were unresponsive. Zen Master Yinya of Jiqing⁹⁹ who was already 79 years old, and whose religious discipline was most strict, came, and as he was about to set out the offerings of food, the Ling girl's betrothed, Jiang Yuxiu, who had never believed in ghosts bore unspoken criticism in his heart. [The ghosts then spoke through the girl,] saying, "Why does your family let outsiders curse us?"

Then someone asked [Yuxiu about this matter], and it was indeed true. Yuxiu then knelt and admitted his guilt.

The ghosts then said, "Today you were most sincere in your offerings, and the Dharma master's power is great.¹⁰⁰ For this reason, [even] Hanlin¹⁰¹ himself came. However, since we are to leave for good, Minister Liu¹⁰² must see us off."

⁹⁶ Burning is the means by which people in the living world could present gifts or offerings of money to the dead.

⁹⁷ Presumably Ling Juji had resorted to this ritual earlier in an attempt at exorcism.

⁹⁸ *Yankou* 餓口, literally "fiery mouths", originally a term to describe the appearance of hungry ghosts, is also used to refer to the ceremony in which offerings of food are made to ease hungry ghosts' suffering

⁹⁹ This could be Jiqing Monastery (Jiqingsi 集慶寺) in Hangzhou.

¹⁰⁰ Referring to Zen Master Yinya.

¹⁰¹ *Dai Kanwan Jiten* 大漢和辭典 contains an entry on Ling Dahan 凌大寒, whose "style name" was Hanlin 寒林, and whose place of registry was Wucheng 烏程 County, located in modern Huzhou Municipality (Morohashi 1957-1960, v. 2, p.156). However his dates of birth and death are not provided, and it is unclear what relation, if any, he had to Ling Juji's clan.

The Ling girl then painted her face, and braving the rain, went out of the central hall and sat and observed the *yankou* ceremony as if she were not ill.

Mr. Jiang Yuxiu himself saw Hanlin and the dark-faced one spitting fire. Their appearance was startling and frightening, and he piously made obeisance. From this time on, the two ghosts vanished, and the Ling girl's lingering illness was as if gone.

(After the Ling girl married, she became pregnant twice altogether, but in the twelfth month of dingyou year (1658), she died.)

Ling Juji's own preface reads:

As for the explanations of former lives and karmic retribution found in [historical] records, I am familiar with all of them. I engage in [writing this book] to relieve my clan from their mental strain, and to create authoritative words to admonish the world. This is that which Confucian scholars do not speak of. How could I know today that [such things] could happen so near as to my own self? As for [those things] which I witnessed with my eyes and ears, [none] were even the slightest bit [the product of] shadow and echo. The facts and principles involved and the names all can be verified. Though I didn't want to believe it [myself], I could not [but believe it]. For this reason I did not dare to hide [anything], and carefully relate the matter as follows.

His preface further says:

From the twenty-fifth day of the fifth month of 1655 year to the thirteenth day of the sixth month, I calculate that [there were] eighteen days where one grain of rice did not enter [her stomach] and her eyelashes did not meet, and I thought she had died. She lay there as stiff as the dead, but when she came to, she was as peaceful as usual. From the beginning to the end, she never [uttered] a sentence but was muddled with

¹⁰² I.e., the Ling girl.

netherworldly aphorisms too numerous to write down. So as to avoid degenerating into wild talk, I have not dared to add one word of embellishment.

I think that some of the people of this world, confident of their talent and power, presume upon their position, and with little sense of propriety commit all manner of heart-rending, bone-piercing acts. Do they know that for [those acts] which go unavenged in this life, below deep water¹⁰³ there will still be those who harbor grievances with secret malice and are ready and willing to avenge them in the next life? They will make clear the names and expose the acts [of the perpetrators], and there will be no way to cover them up. This is fearsome indeed.

Because of this, I have placed on record the entire matter from beginning to end, my intent being [similar perhaps to] the unseen hand of the divine arousing the masses from slumber, or admonitions for keeping officials respectable.

Lu Qi's commentary:

According with the Ling girl's illness having flared up in 1653, I have checked throughout the preceding 60-year [period] for her ancestry, and [I have found that] there was only one man surnamed Liu who served as Regional Inspector of Huaiyang. His personal name was Yinglong, and he styled himself Zaitian. He was a man of Shaoyang County, Baoqing Prefecture, Huguang Province. He passed the imperial examinations of 1580, the eighth year of the Wanli reign period. It is written that the Examination Master of the Two Chambers was Yu Menglin, who styled himself Youfeng. A man of Qimen, his place of registry was Jiangning. He passed the imperial examinations in 1574, and served as Junior Compiler.

¹⁰³ I.e., in the netherworld.

The principal examiner, Shen Shixing, was a man of Wu County, who passed the imperial examinations in 1562. The Vice Examiner Yu Youding, a man of Yin County, [also] passed the imperial examinations in 1562.

Moreover, I have found that Liu Yinglong was number eighty-nine in the provincial examinations, number 159 in the metropolitan examination, and number sixty-one of the third-category Associate Metropolitan graduates in the palace examinations. [After serving as an observer in the Ministry of Rites] his first appointment was as District Magistrate of Kunshan. In 1586, he went to take [a position as Intendant] of the Sichuan Circuit. In 1588, he took a position as Salt-control Censor of Changlu. In 1589 he became the Regional Inspector of Huaiyang. The year 1590 he spent in mourning for a parent. In 1594 he was appointed Regional Inspector of the Henan Circuit. In Shanxi during 1595 he recuperated from an illness. From 1600 he was the Censor inspecting the Jiangxi Circuit, and the Regional Inspector of Nancheng. In Fujian in 1604 he became the Regional Inspector of Shuntian. In 1605 he became Vice Minister for Ceremonials. In 1607 he recuperated from illness. From 1589 when he was a regional inspector in a man's body, to 1653 where he was in female form and seeing ghosts, all together it was sixty-five years. Moreover, now, in 1655, it is sixty-seven years. However, the record [only] states his surname, given name and "style name". The difficulty is that there are no other alternate names [recorded]. Could it be that the one named Liu Yinglong, styled Zaitian, also had the sobriquet of Yutai? Besides him, there is only one other man surnamed Liu who was the Regional Inspector of Huaiyang, a Mr. Liu Dashou, styled Zhenbai, of Shaoyang Prefecture, Fang County, Hunan Province, who passed the imperial examinations in 1613. However, he served in Huaiyang in 1623, [a time] remote from

today by only thirty-three years, and so it doesn't fit with the previous story. Allow me to look into this again.

[At any rate, however, the mention of] the two from Huaiyang, Ni Ruilong and Yuan Changru, as well as the family historical records of Mr. Liu probably suffice [for this story] to be passed on and believed.

Lou Zhigao [9]

Lou Zhigao was a man of Taiping Quarter in Qiantang County. A forty-year-old worker of hides, he was kind and sincere, modest and restrained, intelligent and literate.

By Hangzhou custom, the Qiantang County Temple Deity of the Eastern Peak was the most celebrated. Every year on his birthday, the twenty-eighth day of the third month, all the inhabitants of the city, noble and common, would burn incense and make obeisance to him.

On the twenty-sixth day of the third month of 1657, Zhigao piously made an early offering of incense and returned home. On the twenty-seventh day at five o'clock in the morning, he suddenly dreamed that there was someone knocking on the door calling out "Zhigao!" most anxiously. He went to answer, and opening the door, he saw a white-haired man wearing a scholar's handkerchief and a dark blue cloth gown who appeared just like the Locality Deity. He said to Zhigao, "Presently someone will come to talk to you. I order you to stay at home. Be careful and don't go anywhere else."

Thereupon the man spurted a breath of air in Zhigao's face. It was cold and chilled him to the bone, and suddenly he woke up. He did not feel any pain, but he could no longer speak. Zhigao suspected this was because his throat was dry, so he slapped his

bed to call for tea to wet his throat. However, when his eight-year-old daughter brought him a bowl, it was of no relief. Alarmed and afraid, his family sent for a doctor. The doctor said, "This is the throat-locking stroke."

Zhigao knew in his heart that this wasn't so, and asking for a brush, he wrote, "My throat will be fine soon. I'm not ill. I just grow weary of speaking sometimes. I'll recover shortly."

As he finished writing, he dreamt that the Earthy Deity, as before, was knocking on his door and anxiously calling out his name. Zhigao once again opened the door, and saw the Locality Deity leading a duty officer accompanied by four sturdy soldiers. The duty officer wore a gold helmet, a crimson gown, and a cape embroidered with dragons. He straddled a large horse, behind which were two soldiers with purple scarves, golden headbands, and gaily colored close-fitting jackets. The two other soldiers wore great round caps and loose dark-blue clothes. Sturdy and strong, the five men were ten thousand times as ferocious in appearance as the heroes of this world.

Taking Zhigao into custody, the men bound him with an iron chain, shackled his hands onto the horse's legs, and followed behind, frequently whipping and spurring the horse on. They traveled so quickly that it was as if they were in flight. Presently the duty officer dismounted and locked Zhigao in a small tower. One of the men held a vermillion warrant, and said to Zhigao, "We have received orders from this department for the urgent arrest of thirteen major criminals. These are no ordinary arrests for the duty officer. You are exactly number thirteen."

Zhigao looked at the warrant, and saw that the name there was written: "Man Zhigao of Deqing, Huzhou Municipality." His mind grew suspicious, and he thought to

himself, "I have always been content with my lot in life and observed the limits of my station. How is it that I have met with this strange misfortune? The surname and home village on the warrant are different from mine. There must be some small mistake."

After a little while, there were three beats of a drum. The duty officer said, "The officials are taking their seats in court." He then bound and took Zhigao away. Zhigao [then] saw a vermilion gate with blue green tiles much like that of the great residence of a high official. It was wide and most spacious, and in the western corridor there were countless people wearing the cangue and shackles just like captured barbarian prisoners being escorted under guard.

Zhigao was bound and brought below the vermilion dais leading up to the hall and forced to kneel among the other twelve criminals. The duty officer reported, "Major criminal Lou Zhigao is hereby delivered."

Zhigao saw that the hall was lofty and bright red in color, greater in brilliance even than that seen in this world. The senior official at the southern end of the hall had a ruddy face and a long beard with three tufts. Perhaps forty or fifty years of age, he wore a phoenix-winged golden helmet, a robe embroidered with golden pythons and a jade belt, and was many times stronger in appearance than the men of this world. Also present were twenty other officials who all wore black gauze caps and red collars.

When the court was called to order, the senior official exchanged salutations with each of the other officials, who in turn sat on either side of him.

(I think this must have been a branch department of the temple of the Deity of the Eastern Peak.)

On the steps on the west side of the hall were thirteen good people, ten men and three women, who ascended to pay their respects. Among the men was one who wore Buddhist rosary beads. The senior official exchanged salutations with him, and with an agreeable countenance inquired after the health of his group and said, "You are all good people, most praiseworthy and estimable."

At this time, Zhigao was kneeling below the dais, and his heart was most sad and afraid. "As for money to use [for bribes], I have not one copper, and of my fellow-villagers, there is not one who know about this. What [happens] if the senior official goes out to greet the guests or goes down to the guest hall to entertain them? Even if he commands me to argue my side and try to extricate myself, this evening I have nowhere to sleep and I am famished. What can I do? I can only risk my life and try to argue my case early."

He then wept bitterly and cried out that he had been wronged. The senior official asked who it was [that was crying]. The duty officer knelt and reported, "That is the major criminal Lou Zhigao."

The senior official said, "Bring Zhigao up here." [Then he said to Zhigao,] "Since you're a major criminal, why do you cry out that you were wronged?"

Zhigao replied, "I am originally a man of Qiantang County, a leather worker who kept to his duty and earned his living [honestly]. I don't know why it is that I was condemned. I saw that the name on the warrant was Man Zhigao of Deqing. He has nothing to do with me." Zhigao then prostrated himself on the ground and begged to be released.

The senior official then took the Qiantang registry and briefly looked at it. There was in fact a leather worker Lou Zhigao [recorded therein].

The senior official said, “[I see that] your conduct has been quite good, and your time in the world of men is not yet up. How is it that you were wrongly taken into custody?”

When Zhigao heard his words regarding longevity, it was only then that he realized he was in the netherworld. Previously he had taken all of this to be government offices, departments and bureaus. Thinking that the senior official might just be the temple Deity of the Eastern Peak, he said, “Previously I piously burned incense for the deities. I think this can be confirmed.” The [senior official, who was, in fact, the] Temple Deity of the Eastern Peak smiled and said, “I know of this.”

He thereupon reexamined the Deqing register, and indeed there was a Man Zhigao who was the real criminal. On the vermillion warrant had originally been written the character for Man 滿, however the three dot strokes that make up the left side of the Man 滿 character were a bit too thick when written with the official cinnabar ink-dipped brush of the Temple Deity of the Eastern Peak. Moreover, the ‘grass’ 艸 classifier at the top had been left off, so that the character was mistaken for Lou 漏. However, as for [the matter of] letting the man from Deqing go, and [instead] taking the man of Qiantang into custody, this was the mistake of the netherworld bailiffs.

The Temple Deity of the Eastern Peak then took the four soldiers [who had taken Zhigao into custody] and punished them each with twenty blows of a wooden rod. Then he ordered another soldier to escort Zhigao back to the world of the living, and warned Zhigao, saying, “When you return you should do good things.”

Zhigao kowtowed, expressed his gratitude, and went out. After a while, he began to wake up fully. His wife and children were just ringing around him at that time, crying and wailing.

(Presumably this [all happened] from the twenty-seventh day around nine o'clock, when he died, to the twenty-eighth day, when he finally awoke.)

After Zhigao awoke, he asked for a writing brush, and wrote, "The Temple Deity of the Eastern Peak wanted to arrest a Man Zhigao of Deqing, but the bailiffs mistakenly arrested me. Today they've escorted back my soul. Quickly prepare some soup and rice and paper money to reward the escort." His family members then got some wine and food ready and took silver leaf paper tinsel and burned it to send the escort off.

(Now, in the netherworld, the exchange rate is heavily weighted. One ingot of clean silver [foil] will definitely get you five parts pure silver [in the netherworld]. However if you just use any old silver foil, then it's just like low quality fake silver, and it can't be used in the netherworld [at all].)

When the escort had left, Zhigao still was unable to speak. Since the bailiffs first had mistakenly arrested an innocent man, and secondly had kidnapped his soul and refused to release it, the neighbors deliberated on taking action and burning a public complaint at the temple of the Deity of the Eastern Peak. Just as they were deliberating on this, Zhigao suddenly saw the four soldiers from before arrive in sedan chairs. They said, "Because of you we were punished. Our legs were beaten to a pulp and now it's difficult to walk, so we all ride sedan chairs now. Be quick and buy some food and wine to apologize to us, and give us each ten taels of silver. In your arranging of this, you definitely can not come up short."

They then said, “None of us eats meat. We only need wine served with vegetarian food, that’s all.”

Zhigao’s family gave them soup and rice, but forgot to set out things for them to sit on. The four reproached them [for this], and [so] Zhigao’s family then set out benches and chairs and burned several thousands in clean netherworld money. One soldier held a cloth bag and collected the silver, [which amounted to] about thirty or forty taels of broken silver altogether.

After they had gone out the door, they came back, saying, “We heard your neighbors have a public complaint. If they burn it [to send it to the deity], we will definitely be punished again. Get it and burn it in front of your bed.”

Zhigao did as they said and burned it completely. He then saw the other soldier take the complaint, put it in his bag, and leave. The Locality Deity [then appeared] in front of his face, and said “You’re healed.”

At the sound of these [words] Zhigao could speak. For a long time after he went on a vegetarian diet and forswore meat, and to this day he is still in good health.

CHAPTER 6

“ACCOUNTS OF SUPERNATURAL RETRIBUTION”, ROLL TWO

Huang Jingfan [10]

Huang Jingfan of Pingwang County, currently residing in Nanxun Town, was born in 1631. On the nineteenth day of the sixth month of 1652, when he was in his twenty-second year he gradually became dizzy. At dawn on the twenty-second day, as he sat idly in his bedroom, there was suddenly a great pain in his head. At once he fell onto the floor and lost consciousness. In his unconscious state there appeared a man with his hair hanging down loosely. He was bleeding and he held a large knife in his hand. The man shouted, “Give me back my life!”

There were [also] several tens of small boys [there] imploring them to resolve, but the man shouted loudly, and from his mouth issued forth a dark vapor like smoke, and the boys were all knocked over. Everything before Jingfan’s eyes [then] went dark.

Suddenly there appeared a white light striking open the dark vapor. Amid the rays was an old monk. Sitting upright, he clutched a staff in his right hand and prayer beads in his left. The monk shouted, “Stop! Stop!” The man replied, “I’ve suffered an injustice for over seventy years. Now [that] he and I have met, how can I stop!

The monk raised his hand and said, “Amitabha!¹⁰⁴ To spare the life of others is a blessing. If all injustices are avenged, when will it end?”

“True, true,” said the man, “but my heart won’t let it go. Today I just won’t kill him, that’s all,” and taking Jingfan’s tongue in his hand, he cut it out with the knife.

¹⁰⁴ Amitabha (*Emituofu* 阿彌陀佛), or “Infinite Light”, is, according to the Pure Land sect of Buddhism, the Buddha who rules over the Pure Land paradise. The term is used here as an expletive.

“Stop! Stop!” cried the monk, “give it back to him!”

“Fine, I’ll return it. Just wait until I cool down,” replied the man, and clutching Jingfan’s tongue, he ran off.

As the monk was leaving, he turned around to look at Jingfan and said, “Do you remember me? I’m the old man of Yunxi from before. You needn’t be anxious now, within one hundred days there will be news.”

Jingfan awoke to see a group of people standing around him. He wanted to relate what he had seen, but he was unable to utter a sound. Stroking his mouth, [he found] his tongue was still there. There was only a slight, dull pain in his throat and chest; otherwise he felt no discomfort.

That night, as he lay alone, he was faintly aware of a girl outside his window. She called out, “So you’re having a nice sleep!” and sprinkled mud and sand over him. He felt his whole body go numb and start to ache, when suddenly a warrior holding a white parasol came and covered him. This went on for several nights. Then on the first night of the seventh month, as Jingfan lay together with his wife, the warrior [again] covered his body with a parasol, and holding his nose, took off. However, the parasol was very small, and only covered Jingfan’s own body. The mud and sand that hit the parasol rolled immediately off, but that which touched his wife gave off a faint glow like firelight.

This continued for three nights when Jingfan’s wife [began to] run a high fever. Jingfan knew in his heart [why this was], and so he went to sleep together with his maternal grandfather. The warrior once again covered his body with the parasol and, holding his nose, ran off. The sand that fell on his grandfather’s body also turned into fire-like rays, and in two days his grandfather also developed a high fever.

From this time on, Jingfan slept alone, and the warrior repeatedly came with a parasol to cover him. Jingfan thought to himself, “I wonder who this warrior is?”

The warrior suddenly said, “I come on the King’s orders.”

Jingfan thought, “I wonder what King this is?”

The warrior replied, “My King is the King of Enlightenment,¹⁰⁵ and I hold in my hand his Sitatapatra.”¹⁰⁶

Jingfan thought, “These six words are the heart of the Surangama mantra.¹⁰⁷ Ordinarily I recite this often to myself. Now I don’t know why [this is happening]. Perhaps I should recite the mantra [now]?”

The next day, Jingfan piously kept [reciting] the mantra, and at night he saw that the parasol the warrior held was twice as big [as before]. The following day he once again continued [reciting] the mantra, but saw only the parasol and not the warrior. The next day he did the same, but at night he saw neither the parasol nor the girl.

Thereafter, he continued to recite the mantra silently. Though his illness did not get better, there was nothing [else] he could do. However, he [was able to] drive off his anxieties [thereby], and his whole heart was pure and clean. He examined himself critically for faults and mistakes, and as for fortune and misfortune, he disposed them to a mindless frame of mind.¹⁰⁸

He tried to console himself by remembering what the old monk had said about the one hundred days, and thus he could pass his days without feeling depressed.

¹⁰⁵ I.e., the Buddha.

¹⁰⁶ The Sitatapatra (*Xidaduobandaluo* 悉怛哆般怛囉), or “White Parasol”, is usually associated with Ushnisha-sitatapatra, “[The Goddess of the] Victorious White Parasol”, a female manifestation of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, who holds a parasol which protects sentient beings from misfortune and illness.

¹⁰⁷ This is a mantra contained in the *Surangama Sutra* (*Lengjiayan jing* 楞加嚴經), or “The Sutra of the Concentration of Heroic Progress”, which states that concentration is a state of mind fixed on one point which is said to be unlimited and unimpeded, like the free movement of a hero (Keown 2003, p.283).

¹⁰⁸ That is, he resigned himself to his fate and did not actively try to change it.

On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, he sent for a monk to perform a ceremony of penitence for him. Jingfan asked the monk in writing, “When at first I became ill, I saw a monk who called himself ‘The old man of Yunxi’. I don’t know who he is.” The monk replied, “Formerly there was a monk called Lianchi who opened a school at Yunxi.”¹⁰⁹ The monk then related to Jingfan the story of Lianchi, and Jingfan kept it in mind.

[That] night he dreamed that he saw an old monk whose body was tall and broad, and who came to him and said, “Hmph! You’re thinking of Lianchi? Don’t learn from his eating with the door closed!”

When he woke up he couldn’t comprehend [what had happened]. Suddenly his chest became closed and blocked off, and not even a grain of rice could enter. It was only after three days that he thought to eat only bland things, and only then did he feel better. [But] as for salty and sour things, he could not eat them any longer.

At this time, Jingfan’s mother was vexed that his illness was not getting better. She consulted various fortune-tellers, and they said, “There are spirits haunting him, and vows that he has not completed.”

Jingfan thought, “If I have offended the spirits, then I should fast and examine myself critically, not kill living things, and pray to undo my bad karma. As for my vows, there are none except [that one time] during beginning of the first month when I dreamt someone was saying to me, ‘In summer or autumn you will meet with misfortune. If are willing to listen to me, copy out the entire *Lotus Sutra* and you can avoid this calamity.’”

¹⁰⁹ Zhu Hong 祿宏 (1535-1615) of Renhe County, Zhejiang Province, whose original surname was Shen 沈, and who took the religious name (*faming* 法名) Lianchi 蓮池, was a Buddhist theologian of local renown who founded a monastery on Mount Yunxi 雲栖 on the outskirts of Hangzhou.

Jingfan had discussed this [episode] with his grandfather. He had wanted to copy the sutra, but ultimately he didn't do it. Since he had made up his mind [to do it], but had not carried it out, this was a breach of discipline, and thereupon he planned to begin copying on the seventh day of the eighth month.

That night he suddenly dreamt of his father facing him and shedding tears. Jingfan was grieved and woke up. He then thought, "[This must mean that] my father has been captured. I wonder, is he alive or dead?"

At that point Jingfan wished to copy the sutra, and vowed, "On behalf of my father, and relying on Buddha's ubiquitous divine powers, if my father is alive, may he return home, if dead, may he rise to heaven."

Uttering this vow, he chose a *xinhai* day, his father's sexegenary day-cycle birthday,¹¹⁰ to begin copying, and set a deadline of the twenty-ninth day of the ninth month to finish.

On the afternoon of the twenty-ninth day, all of a sudden a great pain flared up in his heart, and he vomited more than one quart of blood. Exhausted, he lay alone for a time, and the pain grew even worse. Suddenly, after more than two hours had passed, he felt his body falling from the bed, and saw an old man. The old man had white whiskers and brows, and a tall hat and wide sleeves. He clutched a staff and was accompanied by a monk. The monk smiled at Jingfan, saying, "Why is it that you are so attached to this source of your misery? Now your debt of injustice has already been cleared. Come with

¹¹⁰ Xinhai is the forty-eighth day of the sexagenary day-cycle.

me to the master's place to walk a bit and you can clear your mind and listen to me recite the sutra." The monk then [began to] recite the *Diamond Sutra*.¹¹¹

(I have heard that the sound of the sutra gradually lessens the pain in one's heart.)

Jingfan listened to the monk recite the sutra as they walked on the road, and when the monk finished reciting, his pain was forgotten.

When the monk stopped walking, they saw a large house in front of them. On the sides of the gate hung a couplet, which read, "Of the various evils, lasciviousness is foremost. Of the many virtuous deeds, filial acts are principal."

The monk said to Jingfan, "The Eastern Prince is inside. You can go in and have an audience with him. I'll wait in an outside room." He then said to the old man, "You may also go in with him. He has already experienced transmigration and will not again be aware of himself. You can request that the keeper of documents explain to him the reasons."

Thereupon they entered the interior hall. Within the hall people said to them, "Today is the first day of the month. The Ten Princes [of the netherworld] will have an audience with both of you. Stay there."

Presently several men wearing caps and robes entered bearing ceremonial tablets. Among them was one who proudly held his head high. The old man pointed, saying, "That is the loyal minister Yang Jisheng." When [the initial formalities] were concluded the ten kings all went out. The old man then knelt down together with Jingfan at the bottom of the dais. Jingfan saw a man with a tasseled ceremonial cap sit within the

¹¹¹ The *Diamond Sutra* (*Jingang jing* 金剛經), also known by its full title "The Diamond-cutter Perfection of Insight Sutra", is a short text from the corpus of the *Prajnaparamita* ("Perfection of Insight") which compresses the essential teachings of the latter into a few short stanzas summarizing the doctrine of "emptiness" or "voidness" (Keown 2003, p. 321).

curtains. He was more than ten spans tall, with a face more than a span wide and clean and white as jade. His attendants and guards were very great in number.

The old man laid out fully his reason for coming. A man wearing a great cap and crimson robe and holding a register came to the foot of the steps and said to Jingfan, "If you want to understand [the principle of karmic] cause and effect, listen to my words." He then called to his attendants to summon forth Liu Zhilin.

Presently a man arrived, and it was none other than the one who had cut out Jingfan's tongue.

The crimson-robed man said:

Formerly there was a Great Minister Liu, whose public name was Gongchao. His family was for generations in Beijing, and he was born in the second year of the Jiajing reign period (1523). His father and grandfather were both rich men. The Great Minister studied and bought his way into the ranks of officialdom. He was skilled at argumentation, tall, strong, and full of energy. Because of the wealth of his father and grandfather, in addition to his own talent, he [became] intimate friends with Zhao Wenhua. Zhao [later] introduced him to Yan Song, and they also became close friends. Thereafter, [the three] shared an illustrious reputation throughout the area.

At that time, the Japanese barbarian pirates invaded southern [China]. The court ordered Zhang Jing and his men to go and suppress them, and Zhao Wenhua to supervise the troops. Zhao Wenhua secretly invited Great Minister Liu to go with him. When they arrived south of the Yangzi River, Great Minister Liu inveigled Zhao Wenhua, saying, "The Japanese troops are very few. If you lead

the headquarter troops and take out [the Japanese] first, then you can take all the glory for yourself.”

Zhao Wenhua did as the Great Minister said, but was soundly defeated by the Japanese. Wishing to turn the defeat into victory, he urged Zhang Jing to advance his troops that very night. Zhang Jing, [however], wished to wait for two [more] columns of troops to arrive, and only then launch a pincer attack, for this was not the time for a rash advance.

[Because of this] Zhao Wenhua held a grudge against Zhang Jing. As a result, Great Minister Liu said to Zhao Wenhua, “Why don’t you quickly return to the Capital¹¹² and discredit him?” Zhao Wenhua thereupon entered the Capital and spread rumors that Zhang Jing was consorting with the pirates and bringing the disaster to the people.

Zhang Jing later combined his army with the two other columns and soundly smashed the Japanese, and consequently the south was pacified. When Zhang Jing entered the Capital to report the victory, however, the court had him imprisoned and beheaded for falsely taking the glory of the military success for himself.

Great Minister Liu had three sons. The eldest, Zhilin, son of Lady Jin, was born in the first month of the thirty-eighth year of the Jiajing reign period (1559). When he was just one month old, Lady Jin died. In the third month, Great Minister Liu took Lady Tao as his second wife. In the twelfth month she bore Zhibao, and later, Zhimao. When they had grown, Great Minister Liu wished to betroth Zhilin to the daughter of Liu Qingchen. Liu Qingchen also wished to take

¹¹² The capital at this time was Beijing.

Zhilin as a son-in-law, and made the match. However, as Zhilin was repulsive in appearance, Great Minister Liu presented Zhibao to Liu Qingchen [in place of Zhilin].

The Great Minister then betrothed Zhibao to a daughter of the Zhou family, and eventually the two sons were married. Miss Liu was both beautiful in appearance and talented. Miss Zhou, however, was ugly and stupid. Subsequently, when both sons had been successfully married, Miss Liu found her husband to be ugly, and Zhibao began to hate his wife.

Lady Tao had a fierce disposition and was resourceful. She spied and knew [the family] secrets. She often spoke together with Miss Liu of Zhibao's handsomeness. One day, she took advantage of Zhilin's absence to set out wine in her room, and pulled Zhibao and Miss Liu [into her quarters] to drink together. Later [the two of them started to] exchange gifts. Their carrying on continued for two months and [finally] resulted in scandalous behavior.

At this time Great Minister Liu knew of these goings on, but made no inquiries into the matter. However, Miss Zhou spoke persistently of the injustice. When Miss Liu heard of this, she sent a servant girl to bring wine to Miss Zhou. When Miss Zhou drank the wine, she developed a pain in her abdomen. She suspected the wine was poisoned, and went to go tell Lady Tao.

Lady Tao had never been pleased with Miss Zhou, and [moreover] was afraid that she might divulge the family secrets. Thereupon Lady Tao comforted Miss Zhou with kind words and invited her to stay in her chambers and drink some wine. At midnight, Lady Tao suddenly stabbed Miss Zhou in the heart with

a knife and buried her under the bed. The next day she pretended to look for Miss Zhou, but she [of course] was nowhere to be seen. Lady Tao then spread the word that Miss Zhou had run off with someone, and [thus] ended the matter.

Miss Zhou's mother had also been suspicious of her daughter, and ultimately didn't pursue the matter any further. Now that Zhibao had lost his wife, he became daily ever more intimate with Miss Liu.

Zhilin [eventually] heard some faint rumors of this matter, and berated his servant girl in his chambers. When Lady Tao heard of this, she said privately to Zhilin, "Recently I have heard that Zhibao has been roaming around in your room. Did you know of this?" Zhilin replied that he, too, had heard something of it.

Lady Tao said, "This is a great breach of domestic discipline and great transgression of human relations. This animal, though I bore him myself, has now come to be so unworthy, it would be better not to have such a son. I must kill him."

Falling for her ruse, Zhilin left. Lady Tao then sent for Zhibao, and said to him, "This matter of you stealing your sister-in-law has failed and been exposed. Your life is in danger."

Zhibao said, "What shall I do, what shall I do?"

Lady Tao said, "In doing good, one must be thorough. In doing evil, one must also be [just as] thorough. You can hide underneath my bed. I've good a good plan."

Zhibao did as Lady Tao said. Lady Tao then said to Zhilin, "Tonight pretend that you're going out. When your younger brother and Miss Liu find out

[you're gone], they will inevitably meet somewhere. At night hide yourself in my room, and at midnight, you and I will take up weapons, enter the room, and kill Zhibao."

Zhilin then falsely said he was going out. At night he came to his stepmother's room. Lady Tao sent away her servant girls and alone deliberated with Zhilin on how to capture Zhibao. Lady Tao then took out some fine wine and firmly persuaded Zhilin to drink it. Zhilin soon got drunk. Then Lady Tao suddenly grabbed Zhilin's throat and called to Zhibao, "Now! Now!"

Zhibao cut off his elder brother's head, and together with Lady Tao stealthily opened the back door and carried the corpse two or three *li* away and dumped it in the street.

The next day many passersby came to notify the family. Great Minister Liu took Zhilin's corpse and had it buried, but never found out why this had happened. Of the family's slave girls and maidservants, Zhibao feared that those that roamed within the house would let out what had happened, and so he either had them secretly beaten to death or poisoned.

Subsequently, Lady Tao persuaded Great Minister Liu to have Miss Liu married to Zhibao. As soon as the marriage was completed, [however], ghosts roamed the house during daylight and haunted them in every possible way. Exorcisms and prayers [to dispel them] did not achieve any result.

When almost three years had passed, Zhibao was 25 years old. One day a monk holding an iron staff came to the gate to beg for alms. Miss Liu had never been courteous to Buddhist monks or Taoist priests, and when she saw this monk,

she tried to drive him away. When the monk raised his staff to strike her, some members of the household ran to tell the Great Minister. The Great Minister came out and said to the monk, “Why are you here?”

The monk replied, “If I want to take a jewel, then I must break a willow branch.”¹¹³

Great Minister Liu didn’t understand the monk’s words. The monk said, “I want to meet your son.”

The Great Minister ordered Zhibao to come out to meet him. Zhibao asked the monk, “What are you doing here?”

The monk said, “I have come to beg alms.”

Zhibao said, “What Power do you have that you dare to come here to beg?”

“I can dispel all vengeful souls,” replied the monk.

Zhibao found the monks words to be strange and unusual, and led him into the house. “There are many vengeful souls in my house. Can you restore order?” asked Zhibao.

“Bringing order to vengeful souls is extremely easy,” replied the monk, “You must first bring order to your heart. The heart is the master of the myriad things on earth. If the heart is depraved then depravity will come. If the heart is upright, then depravity is destroyed.”

Zhibao then asked, “What is the method for rectifying the heart?”

¹¹³ This is a pun on the character *bao* 寶 in Zhibao’s name, meaning “jewel”, and Miss Liu’s surname, which means “willow”.

The monk replied, "One must cherish the heavenly principle. To understand the four words 'heavenly principle' and 'human hearts': this is the way to rectify the heart."

Zhibao asked, "How must one act if he is to be in accordance with the heavenly principle?"

The monk said, "You must just be fair-minded and not do to others what you would not have done unto you."

Zhibao lowered his head for some time.

The monk then said, "I have come to beg alms. If you are willing to give, then the various ghosts will cease. If you are unwilling to give, then there will be no end [to them]."

"Whatever it is that you want me to give, I will certainly do as you order me to," said Zhibao.

"I want nothing other than Miss Liu," said the monk.

"Miss Liu is my wife," said Zhibao, "how can I part with her?"

The monk touched Zhibao's heart with his staff and said, "The 'heavenly principle' and 'human hearts'! If you [yourself] are unwilling to part with her, how then could someone else part with her?"

Zhibao was greatly astonished. The monk thereupon left in a hurry.

Zhibao went out to look for him, but the monk was already gone. Zhibao then sat alone and thought to himself, and deeply repented of his errors. He said to himself, "If one has not yet attained the Way, then his heart will change according to his circumstances. Today I have chanced to hear the monk's words, and have started

to repent of my errors. If I again hear the evil words of another, I will sink [further into depravity]. I may as well go to Wutai Mountain¹¹⁴ to visit this monk and ask him for the method of self-renewal.”

Repeatedly he wished to go, but his father and mother did not allow it. For over three months he stayed at home, and day by day the ghosts and demons grew ever more rampant so that Zhibao could find no peace.

Finally he made a resolution, saying, “Such is my predicament now that if I don’t rouse myself, once my span on this earth is over and I’m dragged into hell by this wicked business, won’t I be sorry! Today I must do nothing but achieve the proper fruits¹¹⁵ and save my mother and father. If I follow their order [not to go to Wutai Mountain] and live out my days contrary to what is right, then I will cause them to fall into hell with me. This would be obedient in a small way, but disobedient in a great way. ”

Consequently Zhibao made up his mind to go to Wutai Mountain. In the mountains west of the Capital was a temple called the Blue Cloud Monastery. Of the two monks there, one was named Biyan, and the other was named Yunsong. Both monks had previously made obeisance to the Big Dipper¹¹⁶ and recited sutras on behalf of Great Minister Liu’s first wife Lady Jin, and [thus] they were acquainted with Zhibao. Zhibao went to the temple to look for the two monks, but at this time Biyan had already passed away and only Yunsong was there.

¹¹⁴ Wutai Mountain 五台山, once home to hundreds of monasteries and shrines, is located in modern Shanxi Province, and is one of China’s four sacred Buddhist mountains.

¹¹⁵ I.e., positive results as the fruition of a course of action.

¹¹⁶ The Big Dipper is the deity of a major Daoist cult associated with longevity.

Zhibao said to Yunsong, "I wish to go to Wutai Mountain. Please accompany me."

Yunsong said, "You are only a young man, [yet] you wish to meet the Great Master. I am already old, so even if I die, what is there to regret?"

Thereupon they went to Wutai Mountain together. At this time there was a Zen master called Huanyu presiding over the monastery. Zhibao looked at all the monks but could not find the monk from before [who had come to his house]. They had remained there over a year [when] they heard that at Yunxi there was one named Lianchi who had opened a school. Zhibao then traveled with Yunsong to Yunxi.

When Lianchi asked why they had come, Zhibao told him everything that had happened, and asked to confess his sins. Lianchi then instructed Zhibao on how to repent, and had him carry out a three year period of ascetic discipline. Zhibao put on a cassock, shaved his head, and took the Great Vows of Abstemption.¹¹⁷ He took the name Dahui, and Yunsong changed his name to Ta-hui. Zhibao then renounced the household life and spent his days chanting the name of the Buddha.

One day he asked the master, "What effect will chanting the name of the Buddha produce?"

The master said, "If you chant the name of the Buddha, then you attain Buddhahood."

Zhibao asked, "If I chant the name of the Buddha, when can I attain Buddhahood?" The master said, "You can attain Buddhahood at any time."

¹¹⁷ These are the complete commandments of Buddhism, which for a monk number 250.

Zhibao asked, “How is it that I have not attained Buddhahood by now?”

The master replied, “Why don’t you go ahead to attain Buddhahood right now?”

Thereupon, Zhibao became enlightened [to the truth of Buddhism].

When Yunsong died, Zhibao lived alone at Yunxi for over ten years. Later he went to Jinsu Mountain. [A monk there named] Miyun asked him, “Where have you come from?”

Zhibao replied, “Yunxi.”

Miyun asked, “What do you usually do all day?”

Zhibao replied, “Chant Buddha’s name.”

Miyun said, “Let me see you chant.”

Zhibao replied, “I already have.”

Miyun said, “I’m afraid you’re wrong.”

Zhibao said, “It is you, oh monk, who is wrong.”

Miyun said, “You still have to endure ritual beatings. Go and perform labor along with the rest of the monks, and then seek enlightenment in a *ganshijue*.”¹¹⁸

Still not enlightened, Zhibao then went to Mt. Li, built a hut, and lived there until the second year of the Chongzhen reign period (1629). When he heard that Miyun was at Mt. Xuanmu, he went there and asked him, “How do you like the saying ‘If you don’t brave the frightening surge, it’s hard to find a fish to your satisfaction’?”

¹¹⁸ *Ganshijue* 乾屎橛, literally “dried shit scraper”, used here metaphorically to refer to things that are base or even repulsive in nature. Miyun’s intention is that Zhibao understand that Buddhism is a way of life, not just a set of rituals like chanting. To attain enlightenment one must experience life’s hardships, not simply sit in comfort and chant the Buddha’s name.

Miyun replied, “There’s no surge here, nor are there fish. What is the point of talking about frightening surges and satisfying fish?”¹¹⁹

Zhibao then awakened to the truth [when he realized what Miyun said was right]. He returned to Mt. Li and died two years later.

After he died, he came before Heavenly Scion Yama. The judges deliberated, saying, “In youth, although you did great evil, you ultimately were able to awake from sin. [However], since renouncing the household life and becoming a monk, you have never expounded the doctrine for the benefit of others. Now [I’ll let you] go and be [reborn into] human [form]. You will have wisdom but not the Great Blessing.”¹²⁰

Zhibao said, “I never dared to expect the Great Blessing. However, in my life as a monk, I never attained the Great Completion. I wish to obtain longevity [in my next life span] so that I may complete my aim.”

Heavenly Scion Yama said, “You were only supposed to live for fifty-five years. Now you desire to cultivate [the Buddhist Way]. This aim is commendable. [Your next life span] will be increased to seventy-seven years.”

Zhibao said, “My crimes have involved my father and mother, and I have brought harm to my elder brother, sister-in-law and my wife. I wish to save these people, but I don’t know where each of them has gone. I hope that if I am reincarnated, I will get close to them, and will cause them to transform and guide their hearts.”

¹¹⁹ By this he means that that which Zhibao thinks of as surges and fish are illusions.

¹²⁰ That is, one’s share of luck or happiness allotted by fate.

Thereupon Yama gave a command to the judge. Then he told Zhibao, "Your father's first wife, Lady Jin, has already been reincarnated as Miss Shen, and Biyan and Yunsong are now her sons. Your father, the Great Minister, due to the evil he did throughout his life, has been demoted into a female body. Because Miss Jin's eventual fate is to be reincarnated as Yunsong's daughter, you once again will be her son [in a future incarnation]."

"Lady Tao, has endured the retribution of being a hungry ghost, and has now been reincarnated into a donkey's body and you won't be able to meet her. Miss Liu, has endured the retribution of being a hungry ghost and was reincarnated first as a pig, then a goat, then again as a pig. After living [as a pig] for three months, because there was little food, she gave what she had to her mother to eat, and she herself starved to death. The Locality Deity presented a memorial [about this] to Heavenly Scion Yama, and since Miss Liu [even as] an animal was able to carry out filial conduct, he let her return to a human body. Now she has already received a female body. I'll give you five more years together as husband and wife."

[The crimson-robed man then said to Huang Jingfan], "And when the judge finished speaking, he immediately dispatched Zhibao to be reincarnated. Now the body you inhabit is that of Liu Zhibao. When he murdered his elder brother, it was the twenty-second day of the sixth month of the seventh year of the Wanli reign period (1578). So now, [77 years later], you have this misfortune. Your body was supposed to die, but due to the strength of your vows in your past life, you've been granted a reprieve. Your former wife Miss Zhou was murdered on the seventh day of the sixth month of the

seventh year of the Wanli reign period (1579), and in a previous year she once came to create misfortune [for you]. However, her murder was not due to you, and so she bears no great grudge [against you]. As for your current wife Miss Qi, however, since she in a past life harmed Miss Zhou with poisoned wine so that Miss Zhou developed an abdominal illness, Miss Zhou's enmity [toward her] has not dissipated, and she still wishes to cause her misfortune.

“Your brother Zhilin's resentment has already dissipated, and he is going to be reincarnated. However, since in his life he did evil, he will be demoted into a female body. He is destined to be your younger sister's daughter, and next year on a *guiyou*¹²¹ day she will be [re] born. Your bad karma is now gone, however, in these twenty years you have not made progress in achieving good and eliminating evil. From now on you should exert yourself every day, and not retreat from your original goal. Do not be defeated by the promise of fame and wealth, nor bound by desires, nor hindered by aspirations, nor poisoned by [the allure of] ease and comfort.”

When the crimson-robed man finished speaking, he called a boy to bring over a gold box. He opened the box and took out a flower petal and placed it in Jingfan's mouth, and at once Jingfan was able to speak again.

When Jingfan had finished making obeisance and expressing thanks, he inquired of his father's whereabouts.

The crimson-robed man furrowed his brow, and said, “Your father's been dead for a long time.”

Jingfan said, “[But] there were two letters [from him].”

¹²¹ *Guiyou* is the tenth day of the sexagenary day cycle.

The crimson-robed man said, "Of the two letters, one was written by your maternal grandfather. Doctor Shi Wanbai knew the truth [of it]. The other was made by your kinsman. Now go back home and offer sacrifices to his manes. Don't expect him to return to you."

Jingfan said, "Of what crime was my father guilty that he met with this misfortune? Where is his soul now? I wish to meet with him."

The crimson-robed man said, "The misfortune that your father met with was [the result of] evil done six lifetimes previous. In this life he established an upright and honest heart and upon death became a deity. In the third month he already ascended to be the Deity of Walls and Moats of Huai'an. You should just keep a filial heart and cultivate the proper Way, and in the future you will see him.

"Your current mother is your father from your previous life. Since she was demoted [in this life] to a female body, you should urge her to change her heart and turn towards the good. Because of the evil she did in her past life, she will be demoted for three lifetimes. Now in the first [generation] she has been reborn to lead an obscure [life, ensuring that] her life will not be happy. In the second generation she will be born to lead a lowly life and [thus] become a slave girl. In the third generation she will be born to lead a perverse life and [thus] become an animal. If as an animal she still does not cultivate herself, then she will have great suffering, and she will not be able to be saved. Be quick and seize the chance in this life to turn her around.

"Your maternal grandfather is your companion from a previous life. In this life he has also received kindness, and you should also eagerly urge him to turn back [to the truth]. When he was at Yunxi, I instructed him in the *Diamond Sutra* more than one

thousand times. He went to Shimen to fulfill his vows (?), and at Donggao Bridge recited the sutra all day long. Every day at the fifth watch, when people begin to wake from their dreams with their hearts clean and pure, he would from time to time loudly hit a clapper and recite the Buddha's name and arouse people's good thoughts. For this reason he has received a blessed reward and attained longevity. Moreover, the belief his mouth proclaims is very serious, and therefore now when he speaks he can win in disputes. However what he believes is not great, and his good-roots are shallow. When he is over 60, if the good does not balance the evil, when he has finished receiving his reward in this life, in the next life the blessing rewarded him will go thin. Moreover, his accumulated merit is not substantial enough to benefit those that come after him, and besides his own person, the whole family will either be poor or die young.

“Go back and teach him to quickly resolve his own proper matters and not to get involved with other people's business. Because of the power of his faith in his former life, in his early years he could outdo others. Now that his *Sraddhendriya*¹²² is rotten, his plotting and actions for others are not only lacking in merit, but also attract enmity.

“Your wife, through a moment's filial conduct, for a time dispelled the bad karma of her lascivious deeds, and she was able to return to a human body. However, the power of her blessing is shallow, and she will not live long. Instruct her to return with utmost speed to the basis, lest she once again receive the body of an animal in the next life.

“Your younger brother, though he has had no great achievements, is still a son who has maintained the family legacy. That's more or less the way things stand.”

After [the crimson-robed man] finished speaking, he ordered a boy to take Jingfan outside to walk around. They traveled fast as if flying. They saw several criminals and

¹²² Faith, one of the five roots or organs producing a sound moral life (Soothill 1937, 296).

prisoners, and arrived at several jails and prisons [and saw] every manner of suffering and misfortune. To this day Jingfan still remembers some of it.

There was a man with his hands bound behind his back and a small flag stuck into his shoulder, which read, "Criminal Niu Defu". The man called out to Jingfan, "You and I are from the same village. Please save me!" Jingfan apologized for being unable to do anything.

A Mr. So-and-so said, "I should have been reincarnated as a pig, but since I abstained from meat with all my heart for one month before my death, I will get to be reincarnated as a dog."

There was also a Mr. Jin who lay in [a pile of] filth, and said, "Since in life I had an insatiable appetite for wine, I have come to this end."

There was also a Mr. Shen who had been pasted onto a wall and had a knife stuck through his throat. Jingfan's heart became saddened and compassionate, and as he chanted the name of Buddha several times, the knife fell onto the ground on its own.

Next there was a very large room where knives and arrows flew from the walls and floor and pierced people's bodies. On the walls were written the names of several people. The boy pointed, saying, "This says that Chen Jiusi was here, but that he's already gone. A Mr. Wang should be coming in here. Zhou Huaji's time in this world has not yet expired, so he hasn't come yet."

Jingfan said, "How is it that the names of those in the world of the living should come to be written here first?"

The boy replied, "The judges of the netherworld investigate the crimes of the living, [and determine] which prison they should enter. Once they have decided which

prison goes with a certain name, if that person again commits a great crime, then the name is moved to another [worse] place. If they have some virtuous achievements, then this serves to reduce their crimes. This is all predetermined while they are living. The judges of the netherworld do not wait until they are dead.”

They then arrived before the hall. The boy took his leave, and went out with the old man. The monk was waiting for Jingfan outside. Jingfan made obeisance and said, “I’m much obliged to you for taking me here. May I inquire where you started?”

The monk said, “I am Daqing of Yunxi. In former times you and I were colleagues, and together with Dajing and Dashan we four went to pay our respects to Dazhi.”

Jingfan said, “When I came, I heard the sound of you reciting the sutra and my heart pain immediately subsided. This is very amazing.”

The monk said, “Don’t you know? The sutra says, ‘A heart is not something that can be obtained, [so] how can there be heart pain [to speak of]?’”

He then said, “Your maternal grandfather made mistakes when chanting this sutra, and [even] left out the word ‘forbearance’. Why didn’t you say anything?”

Jingfan said, “I didn’t know before. From now on I’ll mention it.”

The monk then said, “From now on you must walk the filial path. Filial piety is the essence of man. If a man’s heart lacks in filial behavior, his good deeds, though they be many, are all false and will surely not result in virtue. The gods hate lascivious behavior, and you should eliminate it. Lasciviousness is injurious both to your body and mind. If you eliminate it, the various evils have no roots. As for cultivating virtue, it is easy to accomplish. These two words, [‘cultivating’, and ‘virtue’] are the entry gate to

rising and falling [in the cycle of rebirth], and the point from which you begin. You should practice this. However, you need to ask an enlightened master to point out the way for you. To live deep in the mountains and cultivate tranquility is good. If you are drowned by worldly passions at home, then you have wronged yourself. For in this world, how many can there be who abide in sensual pleasures but are not contaminated by them?”

Jingfan said, “True, true. I sincerely accept your instruction.”

Just as they were talking, someone said, “The Great Master has come.”

Jingfan raised his head and saw among the clouds an old monk sitting upright and holding prayer beads. Jingfan made obeisance and asked for instruction.

The Great Master said, “Homage to the Buddha!”

Someone on the side said, “You’re indebted to him for waking you up to the truth. Why don’t you make obeisance and express your gratitude?”

Jingfan made obeisance to the master. The master extended his hand and struck Jingfan once on the head, saying, “Remember!”

Jingfan then suddenly awoke, startled, and it was already dawn. His illness immediately ceased. He thereupon put on his clothes and got up to speak with his family about what he had seen. Then he took up his pen and wrote it down. At this time it was the first day of the tenth month of 1652.

Jingfan’s own commentary reads:

As for the people [I saw] in the various prisons, I made meticulous inquiries, and [it happens that] they were all friends and relatives. However, I feared there might be

some inconvenience, and therefore I have preserved only their surnames. As for the rest, I did not dare to write [even] one [misleading] word.

The preface of Qian Dewei of Songling reads:

Jingfan's father Ruiqing's given name was Gujian. A graduate of a county school, he is the one who is named [in the story] as the Deity of Walls and Moats of Huai'an. Ruiqing married into the family of his wife, that of Xu Nanchuan of Pingwang Town, and for this reason Ruiqing [himself] became a man of Pingwang Town. In the autumn of 1645, Ruiqing was captured by mutinous soldiers and taken south. At this time Jingfan was 15 years of age. He cried and wept and thought of his father until he vomited blood and wouldn't eat. Xu Nanchuan feared that Jingfan might mortally hurt himself, so he faked a letter from Ruiqing in order to console him. That is [the case of the faked letter] which the crimson-robed man said Dr Shi Wanbai was clear about."

Originally, Jingfan did not know whether Ruiqing was alive or dead. He first heard of his father's death from the crimson-robed man. As for Xu Nanchuan, he was [none other than] Yunsong [reincarnated back to this world]. Wu Wenke, a fellow villager of mine, actually married Jingfan's younger sister. This is what was meant by "Zhilin is your younger sister's daughter." Next year, on a *guiyou*¹²³ day she will be [re]born". Now during the beginning of spring in 1653, on the sixth day of the first month, which was a *guiyou* day, Wu Wenke, it turns out, had a daughter. This is all the more evidence to show that this [statement] was not in error.

¹²³ The tenth day in the sexagenary day cycle.

Jiang Renrui [11]

Jiang Renrui was a man of Jiangqian District, Wulin, who went to go live opposite the Candle Hut. During the fifth month of 1652, he suffered from distension. His illness had become critical when, at midnight, he saw five or six lime peddlers traveling in the direction of Fourth Village. Suddenly they pushed open his door and entered, saying, "In a past life you owed us two thousand taels of silver." They then grabbed him and dragged him outside, and Jiang subsequently lost consciousness.

Thinking he had died, his family burned [for him a paper replica of] a sedan chair, a straw man and such things, and Jiang rode the sedan chair until he reached Fengshan Gate, where the lime peddlers said to him, "We've [traveled] on foot. How is it that you ride alone in a sedan chair?" They walked up, pulled Jiang down onto the ground, piled into the sedan chair, and took off. As they passed the Jiangqian Temple of Bestowing Good Fortune, Jiang saw that his deceased mother and brother were all there before the gate of the temple of the Locality Deity of the precinct.

Jiang then stopped the lime peddlers and shouted in a thunderous voice that astonished them, "What warrant have you received that you dare to arrest an innocent man? We are going to go to the Deity of the Eastern Peak to lodge a complaint!"

One of the judges [within the administration of the Deity of the Eastern Peak] who was surnamed Zhong interrogated the lime peddlers and found that they had no official dispatch, so he scolded them and [told them to] release Jiang. Jiang's mother then escorted him home.

It was already nine o'clock [the next morning] when Jiang woke up [to find that] his two hands were clutching [clumps of] sand and mud. He removed the account books

of the family business, changed his clothes, burnt paper money, and placed rice and valuables in his mouth.¹²⁴

After more than twenty days had passed, he saw the lime peddlers from before return carrying a dispatch. They said, “Our complaint has been accepted. You don’t get to live.”

Thereupon, Jiang died.

Shen Lan’guan [12]

At the intersection of Dongping Temple Lane and Guan Lane in Wulin [lived] a twenty-two year old cook surnamed Shen, nicknamed Lan’guan. On the second day of the tenth month of 1654, a black cat crossed in front of him. Wishing to use its hide to make a Mongol cap, he took a rope and tied it tight around the cat’s neck, but the cat didn’t die. He then used a sharp knife to pierce its throat, and the cat thereupon died.

On the third day of the first month of 1655, he dreamed that the cat said to him, “Since you murdered me, I have filed a complaint, and it has been accepted. Where is the knife? I want to obtain it for evidence.”

When Shen woke up, he felt hatred toward the cat, and rushed to sell off the knife and exchange it at the market for a sharp sword.

On the twenty-first day of the sixth month, after welcoming the Salt Monopoly officials,¹²⁵ he returned home. In an instant he went mad, and said, “The cat has entered

¹²⁴ The latter act refers to the Chinese burial practice *han* 含, whereby rice, pearls, shells and other valuable objects such as coins were placed in the mouth of the corpse before burial. The above usage suggests that Jiang Renrui was preparing for his own death.

¹²⁵ Yanyuan 鹽院 were the officials in the hierarchy that supervised the state monopoly of salt production and distribution (Hucker 1985, p. 581). I am unsure of the significance of this act.

the building! Now it's on the roof beam! Now it's not a cat [anymore], it's become a ghost! Five or seven men have come to beat me!"

He then spoke in a ghost's voice, saying, "A rope won't kill it. I'd better use a knife."

When night arrived, he took a knife and stabbed himself. The blade entered an inch and a quarter deep into his throat.

Fourth Brother Zhu [13]

Fourth Brother Zhu was the Tax Captain of the thirteen sectors and fourteen precincts of Chongde County. On the thirteenth day of the seventh month of 1655, he entered the walls of the county seat, and at three o'clock in the afternoon he got caught in a thunderstorm on Wansui Bridge. Suddenly, a thunderclap struck his body, and as Zhu lost consciousness he saw three people wearing ceremonial caps and belts.¹²⁶ Taking shelter among them he was able to avoid being hit [again]. The mark of the Thunder God's claw [however] was still on his waist, and all of his previous lives flashed before his eyes.¹²⁷ Presumably this is because Fourth Brother Zhu had always piously observed the "Three Officials Feast",¹²⁸ and therefore was saved at the discretion of the spirits.

¹²⁶ These were presumably the "Three Officials" (*Sanguan* 三官), in the Daoist tradition, i.e., the Heavenly Official, supposed to bestow blessings, the Earthly Official, supposed to pardon crimes, and the Water Official, supposed to relieve distress.

¹²⁷ Literally *wudao leilei fenqi* 五道累累墳起, "His five paths piled on top of each other like a mound." I have taken this to mean that the forms of all of his previous incarnations were revealed to him in a rapid succession, the equivalent of "one's life flashing before one's eyes"

¹²⁸ "Three Officials Feast" (*Sanguan Zhai* 三官齋) most likely refers to a Daoist practice whereby believers provided vegetarian meals to Daoist priests and adepts on the fifteenth day of the first seventh, and tenth lunar months, the days associated with the Heavenly Official, Earthly Official, and Water Official, respectively.

Third Brother Jin [14]

Third Brother Jin, a local farmer of Twenty Houses Village, Chongde County, came down with an illness during the seventh month of 1655. Just as he was at his last gasp, he saw an emissary from the netherworld arrive clutching a warrant, and sure enough, the first name on it was Jin's own. The second name was Fan Junjin. Third Brother Jin asked, "Fan Junjin is my landlord. How is it that his name is on here, too?"

The emissary slapped his cheek and said, "Don't talk so much. What business is it of yours? He only has eighteen months left in this world. As for you, you still have a little over a half an hour." The emissary then commanded him to return [to the world of the living]. Third Brother Jin came to and related [what had happened], but when he was finished speaking, he suddenly passed away again.

(Fan Junjin actually did pass away [eighteen months later] on the second day of the month in 1657.)

The Old Woman of Yanzhou [15]

Hu Weigong of Qishui retired [from scholarly life and devoted himself to] divination. In the seventh month of 1654, he rented lodging on the great boulevard at the south end of the Hangzhou Drum Tower. He [once] saw a seriously ill woman approaching fifty in age who had undergone various hardships and had died and later come back to life several times.

She said, "I've [experienced] all manner of misery, and when I [finally] died, I met with the Deity of Walls and Moats of Hangzhou Prefecture. He said to me, 'You are a woman of Yanzhou. We don't have [those] registers here. [Yours] is a masterless soul

for whom there is none to offer sacrifices, and it is not convenient for us to take you into custody.’’

The old woman’s hardship was extreme, and there was nothing Hu Weigong could do about this, save to write a petition to [the relevant officials] of her village of registry and request that her soul be sent to Hangzhou. The Deity of Walls and Moats of Ji approved the petition. Hu Weigong burned it, and at once the old woman passed away [for good].

The Lu Family Servant [16]

A servant in the household of Inspector Lu Yuanfu of Jieji Village, Haining County, betrayed his master, made false accusations against him, and ran off illegally. After twenty years, on the eleventh day of the sixth month of 1655, the young master of the household fell ill and died. On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, when the servant went to his former master’s grave to gather firewood, the image of the young master appeared, and seemed poised to strike the servant’s head. In a panic the servant crossed the river and ran home. [When he arrived] he developed a fever, and crying out, he went blind in both eyes.

Instructor Zhou [17]

Instructor Zhou of Luotang, Haining County, fell ill and died in 1654, leaving only one son, who also died the following year. The Zhou clan was stern in their management of the household, and they had never been pleased with the likes of monks

and nuns coming and going. After the “lesser auspiciousness”,¹²⁹ a nun came to live next door. She rowed a boat to their residence, and as it was then the great festivities of the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month,¹³⁰ she invited Instructor Zhou’s mother and wife to burn a stick of incense [in memory of Instructor Zhou]. However, no sooner had she spoken of the deceased than she suddenly fell to the ground and shouted, “Young Master, spare me!”

Spurting blood all over the ground, she spoke repeatedly in the Instructor’s voice, enumerating her crimes of coming to his house unbidden. She then kowtowed and made a motion as if begging for her life. Panic-stricken, Instructor Zhou’s mother and wife called for the maidservant to prepare ginger soup to pour on the nun to wake her up, and anxiously helped her to get back in her boat and return to her hut. They then held a *yankou*¹³¹ ceremony and a memorial service for the dead, but these were without effect. Up to [the time of writing], it had been more than twenty days, and the nun was [still] murmuring as before and spitting up blood without end.

Guo Tiansheng [18]

In 1622, when he was 22 years old, Guo Tiansheng of Zhaoguo Village, Haining County, lay in bed with an illness. In his dazed and half-conscious state he saw four men clothed in dark-blue and wearing round caps, who [appeared] as if they were carrying out an official errand, jump through the window. [One] carried in his hand a warrant with

¹²⁹ The “lesser auspiciousness” (*xiaoxiang* 小祥) is the 49th-day anniversary of the death of a mother or father.

¹³⁰ *Laba* 臘八, the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month, is, according to tradition, the day on which the Sakyamuni Buddha achieved the Way, and was an important folk holiday in Imperial China.

¹³¹ *Yankou* 餓口, literally “fiery mouths”, originally a term to describe the appearance of hungry ghosts, is also used to refer to the ceremony in which offerings of food are made to ease hungry ghosts’ suffering.

Tiansheng's name on it. Tiansheng suspected that they were Supervisors of Education and Expeditors of Examinations, so he left with them. The four, as before, leapt through the window, and Tiansheng did the same. Looking back, [he saw that] his own body still lay in bed face up.

They arrived before a most magnificent government bureau with corridors several dozen spans wide. The four men led Tiansheng inside an office to the left hand side where they were surrounded by wooden railings like those in a jail. The men placed Tiansheng inside. He saw men delivering dispatches and receiving complaints, having audiences with Joint Investigators, scurrying back and forth and rubbing shoulders somewhat like in the world of men. Presently, at dusk, several dozen signal lamps [were lit] just like in a provincial examination hall, and the whole room was brilliantly illuminated. After a short while, nine beats of a drum were heard, signaling that the judges were about to take their seats upon the bench.

The four then led Tiansheng outside. When the names were called out, Tiansheng saw that these people were without caps and white silk aprons were tied around their waists. The one who called the roll at the first gate was tall, pale-skinned and wore a ceremonial cap and belt, and was only twenty or more years old. The one who called the roll at the second gate was dark-skinned and bearded, wore a ceremonial cap and belt, and was over fifty. They arrived at a great main hall in front of which were steps several spans high with towers and pavilions as lofty and majestic as an imperial mansion.

One by one the names [of the prisoners] were called, and they ascended by the eastern steps and descended by the western steps. Terrified, Tiansheng went up the steps and saw from afar on the south side of the hall a dark-faced administrator wearing a

ceremonial crown with jade pendants and a green robe. Tiansheng only then realized that this was a Prince of the Netherworld and not some kind of provincial educational commissioner.

Weeping bitterly, Tiansheng clambered up to the foot of the bench and begged for his life most urgently. The Prince of the Netherworld said, "Bring the register here."

A court official came forward with the register. The Prince of the Netherworld looked at Tiansheng and, "Your span of life is up. Have a look."

Tiansheng again beseeched him most sorrowfully. The Prince of the Netherworld then said, "Bring the files here."

Tiansheng then saw tall one from before, after performing the proper audience ritual,¹³² enter and present his visiting card. The Prince of the Netherworld looked it over, flipping it back and forth several times, and then called for the files to be brought forth.

Tiansheng then saw the dark-faced whiskered one from before, after performing the same audience ritual, come forth bearing several dozen files. The Prince of the Netherworld read them thoroughly several times before he finally assented, wrote his instructions on the register in vermilion [ink], and showed it to Tiansheng, saying, "[As] you have secret merit, we will add eighteen years to your life."

The Prince's calligraphy was unusually beautiful and lovely. Overjoyed, Tiansheng went out of the hall, but when he arrived at the side of the road, he hesitated and didn't recognize the way to return. Just then he happened across his grandfather. His grandfather said, "Now that you've come here, how are you going to get back home?"

¹³² During imperial times, *Tingcan* 庭參, literally "[the protocol of] visiting a superior at court", required that a civil official kneel and make obeisance to his superior while facing north, and that the superior stand up to receive him. A military official was expected to kneel, kowtow, and announce his name. In this case the superior could remain seated.

Just as Tiansheng was standing there, not knowing what to do, he saw a man with huge eyebrows and white teeth with gourds tied to a staff. His grandfather said, “My grandson can’t find his way back home. We need some of your magic medicine. May I trouble you, sir, to give him some?”

The old man poured out three cinnabar-colored pills.

When Tiansheng raised his head, he saw a great house at the side of the road with the two words, “Heavenly Clinic”. However, he was so thirsty that he couldn’t swallow the medicine. His grandfather then ordered a young boy on the road to bring some water. The boy brought a bowl and gave it to Tiansheng. When Tiansheng swallowed the medicine down he felt his mind and vision suddenly open up and his spirit suddenly return. All of a sudden he came to, and a sweet-smelling fragrance filled the room and did not go away for some days. From this time he recovered.

As for the matter of secret merit, I also made inquiries:

It seems that during the time of the great Fire of the Tianqi reign period (1621-1627) in Wulin, Tiansheng resided at the Blessed Sage Temple. At the time of the Sanyuanfang Temple fire, he saw a woman from Min carrying a trunk heavily laden with valuables. Amidst the crowds of people she mistakenly gave the trunk to Tiansheng. Tiansheng argued most anxiously [with her] that he was not the right person. [However] the Min [people] usually don’t understand Hangzhou dialect, and so the woman went off. Tiansheng carried the valuables to another house and then went back and kept watch at the place where he had come across the woman. Sure enough, he saw the woman come walking up escorting a girl by the hand, weeping and searching for the trunk. Tiansheng told the girl to watch the trunk, and escorted the woman to the roadside. When the

woman recognized her husband, Tiansheng met him and returned the trunk. He did not take one penny from the trunk. This is the matter of the secret merit.

The Licentiate from Yuhang [19]

During the summer of 1655, a Licentiate from Yuhang chanced to leave the city and go to his farmstead, where he saw two men dressed in dark-blue clothing. The men said, “We have a summons for you.” The Licentiate was confused, and thought that the two [had come to] demand grain. Just as he was about to ask his servants about this, the two men said, “We are emissaries from the netherworld. You have done good works in your life, and don’t deserve to die away from home. You can quickly return home and wait for us to take the forty-something others [on this warrant] into custody, and then we’ll come for you.”

In a fluster he hurried home and saw that the two men were already at the gate.. They said, “You’re pretty reliable, and your behavior is good [too.]”

The Licentiate bade farewell to his father, and weeping bitterly, put the family business in order, and at dusk he indeed closed his eyes [and died].

When he arrived in the netherworld, the names [of the condemned] were called one by one. When the Licentiate’s turn came, his name was called out, however, the Netherworld official said, “The arrested man is the wrong Licentiate. We must not make a mistake.” He then looked over the court official’s register, and indeed, the emissaries had made a mistake. He then [commanded that the] arresting officers [receive] thirty lashes of the whip, and said [to the Licentiate], “You have [done] good deeds.” [He then said], “Quick, send him back home.”

When the Licentiate went out of the gate, he begged to see the judge's register. There was nothing the judge could do but to point out the Licentiate's two entries, and said, "You once helped a blind man cross a bridge. You also once gave [someone] a tael of silver to buy a coffin. These two things alone are good [enough]."

When the Licentiate woke up, his family had already dressed his corpse for burial.

Sun Bomou [20]

Once, when Sun Bomou, who lived at the entrance to Guan Lane in Hangzhou, accompanied a friend to the West Brook Tower to buy soap, he passed by the temple of the Deity of the Eastern Peak. Sun Bomou had [always] venerated this deity, but had never got [a chance] to pay a visit. This day he had gotten up too early; it was still only three o'clock in the morning.

As Sun Bomou waited for the [street vendors'] rice to cook fully [so that he could take his breakfast], he dozed off, and [dreamt] there was someone calling him. He arrived before a hall, upon which was hung a tablet reading "Sen Luo Hall".¹³³ At this time Bomou knew he was in the netherworld. [Though he was] extremely frightened, there was nothing he could do but go straight up to the hall and prostrate himself on the ground. Someone called from the dais, "Chen Ziran!" Sun Bomou replied, "That was my name in a previous life."

A Netherworld official then commanded the court officials to inspect the registers. Judges dressed in dark green, red, and blue emerged in droves, all with hideous features and most frighteningly savage in form. Among them was only one who was

¹³³ Senluo Hall 森羅殿 is traditionally the fifth hell in the netherworld, over which King Yama, or Yanluo Wang 閻羅王, presides.

slightly fair-skinned, who escorted Bomou to be inspected. Bomou was thereupon set free to return home. The fair-skinned one enjoined him privately, saying, "I am Jiang Yaoqing, a pottery vendor who lived outside the Wulin city gate. When you die, we two will be officials together. I specially saved you, and nowadays the fee [for that] is one stack of paper money."

Bomou expressed his gratitude and left. When his friend woke him up, he was covered in sweat. He no longer [wished to] buy soap, but instead called for a sedan chair. [He went to] the city gate and inquired about the pottery vendor. Sure enough, there was a Jiang Yaoqing who was the father of a [pottery shop] owner, and who had already passed away eight years earlier.

Presumably, Sun Bomou was greatly startled, and when he returned home, he bought a stack of paper [spirit] money, and inscribed on the top, "Presented respectfully to the Honorable Jiang Yaoqing by Sun Bomou, formerly Chen Ziran" He then burned it. Several years later, on a trip to Peking, he came down with a fever. Critically ill, he saw lines and lines of carriages and horses exclaiming, "We welcome the court official upon his taking up of duty!" It was only after strenuously declining the post that he was able to get free, and thus we can verify the matter of his being saved by Jiang Yaoqing.

To this day, Sun Bomou is still alive.

The Girl of the Pan Clan [21]

The daughter of Pan Yinzhong of Tangqi Town married Shen Da, the second son of Shen Aimin of Wujiaba, Deqing County. After her husband died young, she went to

live with her husband's elder brother Shen Huan, who oppressed her more and more cruelly each day.

[Finally] the girl returned to her parents' house and told her father, Yinzhong[of Shen Huan's abuse]. Yinzhong originally had owed Shen Aimin one thousand cash, but had no intention of repaying him, and wished to use his daughter's death [as a pretext for] repudiating the debt. He prodded his daughter to commit suicide, and in the tenth month of 1656, she hanged herself.

Yinzhong [thereby] swindled [his way out of repaying] the thousand cash, but his daughter's injustice was not vented, and she harbored a hatred for her father just as she had her brother-in-law.

A year later in 1657, Yinzhong's eldest grandson, an intelligent, handsome and healthy boy, was twelve years old. On the tenth day of the second month, the Pan girl spoke through the boy's own mouth, saying, "You'll repudiate debts and swindle others for money, but won't help me to redress my grievance. Well, I'm not going to die alone. I'll be perfectly content to take your grandson [with me]." It was as if these strange words were coming out of the Pan girl's own mouth.

[From this time on] the boy would attempt to hang himself at all times throughout the day. Panic-stricken, his family tried to keep him from being idle, and did not dare to take their eyes off of him. On the morning of the twelfth day, the boy asked for a cord, and not obtaining one, he choked on his own phlegm and died standing up. The whole village witnessed this, and there was no one who did not shiver with fright.

Two Paragons of Female Chastity [22]

On the first night of the storming of Yangzhou on the twenty-fifth day of the fourth month of 1645, while the city was under most violent attack from outside,¹³⁴ Qian Yingshi sat in his front courtyard. At dawn he heard 83 bursts of artillery fire. [Just as] he went out to take a look, an artillery shell pierced the city wall, striking a [passerby] carrying food and drink, knocked away half of his body, and went on to pierce several more walls.

Yingshi hastened back inside, changed his clothes and sat down. Suddenly two persons clothed in plain white silk, each about five inches tall, leaped forward and jumped into Yingshi's lap. Frightened, Yingshi flicked them onto the ground with his sleeve. Once again they jumped onto his lap, and once again he flicked them off. They then jumped into a stack of firewood and could not be seen.

By this time, the city had been taken, and the din outside had become tremendous. In a panic, Yingshi went outside [and saw] a head hanging from the neighbor's gate. As he walked up to inspect it [he saw that] there was nothing [there].

On this day the order was given to slaughter all of the inhabitants of Yangzhou, and after three days, the head of Yingshi's daughter Shuxian indeed hung at a neighboring house. Shuxian had died with her chastity preserved. A girl of the Bian family, Shuxian's mother's clan, had come over [from the Bian household] and made an agreement with Shuxian to die [together].

¹³⁴ On this day, March 20th according to the Western calendar, Manchu troops laid siege to Yangzhou and ordered a general massacre of the inhabitants, which, over the course of ten days, would result in the death of an estimated 800,000 people. See Struve 1984, p. 55, and Wakeman 1985, p. 556-563.

After this, some suspected that the two clothed in plain white silk were none other than the ethereal souls of the two paragons of female chastity come back to the world of the living. Wang Yuyi of Nanchang said this.

Feng Nan [23]

Feng Nan of Haiyan was a thug from an influential family who extorted three hundred cash from a man of the Zhan family. In 1659 Feng Nan fell ill and died. He appeared to his son in a dream, and said, “In my previous life I extorted money from Mr. Zhan. Now [I have been reborn] as a dog, and am receiving most bitter retribution in his house.”

Feng Nan’s son went to Mr. Zhan’s house to have a look. The dog’s fur, shape, and color were all just as his father had said in the dream. The son then begged to redeem the dog and bring it home. Mr. Zhan stipulated that the son repay the three hundred cash. After the son redeemed the dog, he brought it home, and thereafter when people called it Feng Nan, the dog would wag its tail and come forward. To this day the dog is still alive.

Chen Jingquan [24]

Chen Jingquan of Chongde county served as a copyist in the Grain Bureau. In his later years, he converted to Buddhism. [At this time,] copies of the *Lotus Sutra* carved by Incense Handler Chen Xiangyu of the Wen Temple¹³⁵ circulated freely throughout the land, and Chen Jingquan became Chen Xiangyu’s patron.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Possible a shrine to Confucius.

¹³⁶ Devotional undertakings such as the sponsorship of the engraving of printing blocks of sutras was considered a means of acquiring karmic merit.

During the sixth month of 1635, Jingquan dreamed that four emissaries came to him and said, “There is a matter for which you are being summoned to give testimony as a witness.” Jingquan replied, “To go right now would be no problem, however, I am supervising the carving of a sutra, and this vow is [still] incomplete. Would it be possible to delay [this matter] for some time? I’ll go after the sutra is finished, would that be all right?”

The emissaries agreed and left. The next morning Jingquan related this to Xiangyu, and spurred him to work faster. On the morning of *gengzi*,¹³⁷ the sutra was completed, and that night Jingquan fell ill. On the fifth day of the month he passed away, and it is still unknown for what matter he was to give testimony.

Ruan Dayue [25]

Ruan Dayue, because of a private quarrel, attempted to have Lei Yinzü killed in prison. When the [Qing] imperial troops crossed the Yangtze river, Dayue welcomed them and surrendered. Seeking riches and honor, he accompanied them on their expedition to Min. Passing Green Grass Peak, he bent his head and said, “Jiegong, spare me!” and then fell from his horse and died. (*Lei Yinzü had styled himself “Jiegong”*).

Ruan Dayue was unsurpassed in ferociousness and treacherousness, and were he hacked to pieces this would still not suffice to cover his guilt. That he was immediately killed when Lei Yinzü revealed his form is a frightening matter indeed.

¹³⁷ *Gengzi* 庚子 is the thirty-seventh day in the sexagenary day cycle.

Second Brother Cao, a non-Han tribesman of Ganpu Town, was a loafer who was fond of gambling. He answered the summons to arms in 1647 and became a soldier on the Jiangxi expedition, [only to] flee back home in 1648. Early in the seventh month of 1651 he lay in bed and suddenly found he could not get up. His neighbor was making food, and called to him [to come eat], but only in the afternoon did he [finally] arise.

He went to the river's edge to wash his hands and face, and muttered, "I alone didn't kill you. Why are you only looking for me?" He then went to the butcher to borrow a knife. Afraid that Cao would gamble it away, the butcher gave him a dull one. Cao took the knife to the river's edge, all the while sharpening it and muttering to himself.

Someone saw him and brought him back home safely, and watched over him as he lay in bed. At dusk Cao crazily screamed out in agony with a sound that shook the neighboring houses. A neighbor opened Cao's door to look in at him, and [saw that] blood was flowing onto Cao's bed mat. He [apparently] had pulled out the knife and pierced his own throat. He made a motion with his hand as if asking for a brush to write with. The neighbor gave him a brush and paper, and Cao wrote, "In Jiangxi I killed two chaste women, and now they have pursued me here. [It is only] because while I was in Jiangxi I accepted two taels of silver [as a bribe] to let ten people live [that] I [myself] was able to live until now."

He then picked up the knife from the pool of blood and threw it outside, saying "Go find a headman and bring him here." Only after several days did he begin to be

¹³⁸ Cao Xiaoman 曹小蠻 in Chinese, the last character being a contemptuous term for non-Han tribes in the southern areas of the Chinese empire.

aware of the pain [of the wound]. He got [someone to give him] a dipper of water to drink, and with a hoarse voice related the matter in detail just as a [court] page [would].

He said that when Jiangxi Province was first taken, he had captured two women. Their male guardian, surnamed Wang, was the grandson of a Provincial Graduate, and Cao and Shen Zhijiang stabbed him with a long halberd. The two women, who [it turned out] were the wife and younger sister of this Mr. Wang, wailed and begged to die, and then ran and flung themselves into the river [in order to] not be kidnapped. Cao and Shen placed them in the bottom of a boat for several days, [but then] an order was issued within the army not to detain any women. Cao rued that he could not fulfill his lascivious [desires], and together with the corporal of his unit, killed them. The two women exclaimed joyfully, “We’ve escaped from our misery!”

Presently, the souls of the two women came and said, “We didn’t know your name, that’s why we’ve looked for you for three years. We relied upon the Locality Deity to lead us here.”

Several days later, Cao let out a cry and died.

Shen Chunzhai [27]

Shen Chunzhai, nicknamed “Prickly Ash” was an official from Renhe County. After the disorder at the end of the Ming Dynasty, he returned to his hometown, [then] moved to the West Lake, and became the boss of [a group of] undertakers. In 1651, an Imperial Clansman of the Ming said to be of the same generation as the Wanli Emperor Shenzong, the thirteenth emperor of the Ming, and who had fled together with an

Administrator and gone into hiding in Wulin, was captured by the authorities. The two were taken in fetters to the execution ground.

The wife of the Administrator bought two coffins, put together several hundred silver cash and gave them all to Shen to buy the heads of her husband and the king. She hoped to have the heads and bodies together in one place so that they could be interred together. When Shen got hold of the money, he sold the coffins and threw the heads and bodies away. He then tricked the wife, saying that he had already buried the bodies. After several days he went to his wife's parents' grave to drink wine. When it got late, he started walking back home, and as he was about to arrive, he saw two headless ghosts. Speaking through Shen's own mouth, a ghost shouted angrily, "Give me back my head. You took my coffin and money and left me on the side of the road. Now you and I are going to meet Yama!"

Then Shen immediately fainted and died.

Wang Shiyan [28]

Wang Shiyan, a man of Haining County, made his living teaching children. He once came across a confessional service to the Guanyin Bodddhisatva¹³⁹ and the Three Officials and piously made obeisance.

More than twenty years later, on the twenty-ninth day of the sixth month of 1657, he [again] went to a confessional service for the Guanyin Bodddhisatva. As he returned home at five o'clock in the morning, a pain flared up in his abdomen which ultimately developed into inflammation of the bowels. More than twenty days of medicine and

¹³⁹ I.e., the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, who comes to the aid of all true believers who invoke her name.

prayers had no effect. At this time he remembered the Guanyin Bodddhisatva and sighed to himself, “With an honest heart I made obeisance, only to become critically ill.”

On the twenty-first day of the seventh month as he slept soundly, he dreamed that he saw a man wearing a purple headdress and white clothes, who held a yellow flag and beat a gong while walking hastily, saying, “The Great Master of the Universal Gateway¹⁴⁰ has presented successive memorials to the Jade Emperor, who out of pity has approved pardons and reductions [in sentences]. The Deity of Walls and Moats has posted a list of more than one thousand names.”

Hearing this, Shiyan, in spite of his illness, walked slowly over to the Temple of the Deity of Walls and Moats. As he approached, he saw many people coming and going from the temple to have a look at the list of names. When he [at last] arrived before the temple, a man with dark-blue clothes pulled Shiyan over to the list, and the first name on it was Shiyan’s own. The man said, “You have a partner. I’ll take you over and deliver him to you.”

Shiyan’s step was unsteady, so the man had Shiyan lean on his shoulder. As they walked out of the north gate, in an instant Shiyan saw that the gate had closed and was locked. The man said, “Stand outside the gate and wait here.”

The man opened the lock, went inside, and led out an old man who looked like Shiyan. The man then said, “You will thank me.”

Shiyan said, “I’ll give you four silver cash.”

The man said, “Who wants your money? Look at all these sick people!”

¹⁴⁰ Referring to the Guanyin Bodddhisatva. The epithet comes from chapter 25 of the *Lotus Sutra* which is titled *Pumenpin* 普門品, and deals with the saving powers of Guanyin.

As Shiyan looked inside [the gate], the man was suddenly nowhere to be seen. The old man stood side-by-side with Shiyan and did not say a word. Shiyan lifted up the old man's robe to have a look, and saw only feces, filth and blood dripping, and [moreover that the old man] appeared haggard.

Shiyan wished to return home, but was distressed to find that he did not recognize the way, and moreover, the old man at his side had also suddenly disappeared. He had just begun to cry when he saw from afar another old man approach and say, "Where do you wish to go?"

Shiyan said, "Originally I came through the Bean Curd Lane, but I don't know how to get back."

The old man escorted him back to the Bean Curd Lane, and pointed with his finger, [saying], "That's it right there."

Shiyan coughed a few times and awoke, and then [he knew] that this had been a dream. His wife looked after him for more than a month, and [after that] his spirits returned to normal.

APPENDIX

INDEX OF PLACE NAMES IN “MING BAO LU”

Chongde County 崇德縣: Located approx. 40 km northeast of Hangzhou; incorporated in 1958 into Tongxiang 桐鄉 County.

Chun'an County 淳安縣: Located approx. 130 km southwest of modern Hangzhou Municipality.

Deqing County 德清縣: Formerly located in Huzhou Prefecture (approx. 40 km northwest of Hangzhou). Now located in the southern part of Huzhou Municipality, Zhejiang Province.

Donglin Mountain 東林山: Located southwest of modern Huzhou Municipality, Zhejiang Province.

Fujian 福建: Modern Fujian Province in southeastern China (approx. 300 km SW of Hangzhou).

Ganpu Town 澉浦鎮: Located in southeast Haiyan County (approx. 70 km east of Hangzhou).

Guian County 歸安縣: Located in northern Zhejiang Province (approx. 70 km north of Hangzhou); formerly the seat of Huzhou 湖州 Prefecture. Incorporated into Huzhou Municipality in 1981.

Gushu City 姑孰城: Located in southern Anhui Province (approx. 175 km northwest of Hangzhou); formerly the seat of Dangtu 當塗 County.

Haining County 海寧縣: Located in northeastern Zhejiang Province (approx. 40 km northeast of Hangzhou); formerly part of Hangzhou Prefecture. Established as Haining Municipality in 1986.

Haiyan County 海鹽縣: Located approx. 75 km northeast of Hangzhou.

Hangzhou 杭州: Formerly a designation for Hangzhou Prefecture 杭州府 in northern Zhejiang Province. Now Hangzhou Municipality, capital of Zhejiang Province.

Huai'an County 淮安縣: Formerly the seat of Huai'an Prefecture; located approx 40 km from Hangzhou.

Huzhou 湖州: Located approx. 25 km north of Hangzhou in northern Zhejiang Province; Formerly Huzhou Prefecture, now Huzhou Municipality.

Jinsu Mountain 金粟山: Located in Haiyan 海鹽 County, southwest of Jiaxing Municipality (approx. 75 km northeast of Hangzhou), Zhejiang Province.

Min 閩: An alternate name for Fujian 福建 Province, so called for the Min River which runs through it.

Mt. Li 黎山: Located southwest of Xuanwei County 宣威縣 in Yunnan 雲南 Province, approx. 1600 km southwest of Hangzhou.

Mt. Xuanmu 玄墓山. Located approx. 125 km northeast of Hangzhou in Wu County 吳縣, Jiangsu Province.

Mt. Wu 吳山: Located to the southeast of the West Lake 西湖 in Hangzhou Municipality, Zhejiang Province.

Nanxun Town 南潯鎮: Located in the eastern part of Wuxing County 吳興縣, northern Zhejiang Province, approx. 45 km northeast of Hangzhou.

New Market Town (Xinshizhen) 新市鎮: Located to the northeast of Deqing 德清 County, Zhejiang Province.

Pingwang Town 平望鎮: Located in south-central Wujiang 吳江 County, Jiangsu 江蘇 Province (approx. 110 km northeast of Hangzhou).

Qiantang County 錢塘縣: Located in northern Zhejiang Province. Formerly the seat of Hangzhou Prefecture. Now part of Yuhang 餘杭 County.

Renhe County 仁和縣: Located in northern Zhejiang Province; formerly the seat of Hangzhou Prefecture. Incorporated in 1958 into Hangzhou Municipality.

Wulin 武林: Former Hangzhou Prefecture; takes its name from the Wulin Mountains west of Hangzhou.

Yanzhou Prefecture 兗州府: Located in southwest Shandong Province, approx. 660 km north of Hangzhou; now Yanzhou County.

Yangzhou 揚州: Formerly Yangzhou Prefecture. Located approx. 180 km northwest of Hangzhou in central Jiangsu Province.

Yongan County 永安縣: Former county in central Fujian Province, established as Yongan Municipality in 1984.

Yuhang County 餘杭縣: Formerly located in Hangzhou Prefecture. Now part of Hangzhou Municipality, Zhejiang Province.

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